OLD · PEOPLE

BY · HARRIET · E · PAINE

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HARRIET E. PAINE

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By Harriet E. Paine.

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OLD PEOPLE

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HARRIET E. PAINE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ALICE BROWN

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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1910

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To

WINIFRED AND LUCRETIA

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HARRIET ELIZA PAINE

When these chapters on old age were written Miss Paine was not yet sixty. But the signal flags of the other port were out. Age was coming on her prematurely. She had grown very deaf, her sight was dimming, and always a delicate woman, chiefly by reason of overwork, she was the daily prey of that exhaustion which slays the weak and fortifies the inwardly strong to more gallant emprise. So at this time she was trying to pierce the darkness of the path while she retained the keenest insight to compare it with the way behind, and her conclusion was that old age — actual old age —is the last enemy to be overcome. I am sure she would have called it rather than death the last enemy, and her working formula was that it must be met with courage and cheerfulness, upon which it becomes at last a friend. Her courage is not bravado, nor the masking of inadequacy under the trappings of a fictitious youthfulness; her cheerfulness is no sulking patience. She would not

have us lose the dignity and worth of the moment when, like the old men of Rome, unable to fight and scorning to fly, awaiting death in their ivory chairs, we prepare for what must be. Our prancings after the body no longer serves us become, she knows, grotesque; but she would have us walk dutifully, heads up, eyes straight on the home-stretch, to God Who is the end of all.

Her own life had been crowded by study and service, and, in spite of extraordinary troubles, illuminated with that happiness which comes from the constant perception of beauty, — not an acquiescent acceptance of the universe as "very good" because tradition tells us so, and of our making the best of it since we are in a bad box and might as well cry small, lest Setebos overhear, but the healthy, unfailing conviction that this is actually the best of all possible worlds (until it is possible to make it better), and that a thousand lifetimes could not begin to exhaust its near-at-hand wonders and delights. She would be the last person surprised when radium was plucked out of the unknown, or when, to the refined vi-

sion, new spiritual laws reveal themselves. She knew the riches of the treasury.

The brief catalogue of her life — that outer integument of circumstance which, after all, tells no more about us than a toilworn hand bears witness to the number of gardens it has caused to bloom — shows chiefly that she worked continuously and very hard. She was born in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, May 5, 1845, the only daughter of the Reverend John Chester and Eliza Folger Paine, and was a graduate of Wheaton Seminary, where the thoroughness and brilliancy of her scholarship are traditional. Wheaton, in its inception, had a simplicity of oldtime ideals. Miss Paine herself in her Life of Mrs. Wheaton, daughter-in-law of the Founder, comes on this draft, never actually used, but still illuminative, for the incorporation of the Seminary. It is in Judge Wheaton's own hand, and this was the object of the school: "The promotion of piety, religion, and morality; and the education of females in all branches of Science and Literature *that are suitable and proper for them to attend to.*" This was the rather stiff taproot of a school which became a wonder in its

growth and blossoming. Miss Larcom taught literature there and infused into the girls more high and warm emotions even than the love of learning. She herself, in a reminiscent talk about the life there, as she knew it, gave this offhand, charming picture: "The beauty of the life at Norton was the blending of wilderness and garden. The gardens looked out into meadows and woods, and meadow and wood crept up to meet the gardens. Pine forests and old apple orchards ran wild together. Meadowlarks and woodthrushes came up and sang at the Seminary windows at sunrise, waking us before the 'rising bell.' Always there was a sort of wild flower flavor about the girls themselves. . . . We were down in the wet meadows after violets and anemones and arethusas, in our rubber boots, or reciting botany in the arbor across the way in Mrs. Wheaton's garden, using ferns and rose leaves for book-marks in a logic or rhetoric or mental philosophy. Everything was breezy, fresh, unschooled, even in school. This combination of nature and cultivation made the charm of the school, and we learned there the lesson of life, that we are truly educated through

all our existence by growing together, and by entering into the spirit of the growth around us. The garden need never be afraid of the wilderness, and the wilderness may always be at home in the garden."

It was perfectly evident to all of us who, in our turn, came under the teaching and influence of Norton graduates, that the Wheaton régime must have been a tough one. Some of us look back and see clearly that "our teachers" were not as other women, and this is not because we regarded them then from the distance of the leaflet at the foot of the pine. They actually were different, and the tests of our own grown-up years confirm it. They were richly developed, magnificently drilled. They had been held up to an exacting standard of scholarship, and at the same time to reverence and obey the rules of life. But above all, they had a peculiar quality. They had been trained to look for beauty as an actual efflorescence in the universe — an immanence, rather — and to regard it as unspeakably necessary and holy, the sacramental touch and also the bread of life. When the school at Norton was given a half holiday one morning

after a snowfall and sent for a sleighride, because it was judged that they "*must* see the woods in their supreme beauty before one touch of sunshine had dissolved their charm," we know what those women at the head of it thought essential. They were not teaching their girls to shine in graces and acquirement. They were leading them to look through the magic lens of opportunity, to see how "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

After Miss Paine's graduation she taught for a time in Cleveland, in an institution for the feeble-minded, and then returned to Wheaton, to teach the natural sciences and higher mathematics. Now she was set upon by the results of her passionate energy, and, hit hard by overwork, went abroad; yet there, unable to rest, beguiled by the fullness of life, she studied French and German and heard all the music possible, and after she came back the course of her middle years was an unbroken one of teaching, at the Robinson Female Seminary in Exeter, the Oread Institute in Worcester, and the private schools of Boston. Wheaton had always done splendid work in the natural sciences, teach-

ing by observation, by experiment, and "when in the early sixties the first wave of interest in the natural sciences swept over the land" the school rose again to that bigger challenge. It established laboratory work, and its teachers were in the van. This was Miss Paine's excellent training, and according to this standard she in her turn taught. During her later work in the natural sciences she kept on with arduous private study and, one of her compeers writes of her, "soon stood abreast of the specialists." But her territory was not bounded by a specialty. She taught literature warmly, sympathetically, history and languages. Her equipment was very rich. She had holdings in all the kingdoms of the earth.

In 1902 she gave up teaching and returned to her home in Groveland, Massachusetts, and there lived out the rest of her beautiful days. She had taught all the most active years of her life, the rich, fecund part of it, and yet she never loved teaching. She owned that to some of her more trusted pupils. She was devoted to them and their growth, but she was wearied by the rigor of routine, averse to any kinship with the dull task-

master known as discipline, and generalship was hateful to her. For she was the shyest spirit, and her desires were elsewhere. Back in her happy childhood, when a song Festival of the Rose, a child's cantata in the woods, made her innocent paradise, the minister's good little daughter was in love with the idea of writing books. And she did write in the cracks of time between heavy duties, with the slight strength left over from her tasks. There was no overplus of vitality to pour into some big achievement. One novel there was, published anonymously in her girlhood and never owned to later acquaintances, so that to this day some of us thirst for the secret of it. We believe there are still those who know, but because the name was refused us, we turn away. But we think we can guess what manner of book it was. Maybe it was about music — for music was her adoration — something of *Charles Auchester* perhaps, a girl's shy romance, a guess at life as youth would have it, a dutiful child's conception of duty. But all this we who were "her girls" evolved about her, for she was too uncompromisingly cold to her own achievements to think there was anything in

them to tell. Quite unconsciously she walked in the robes of admiration we clothed her withal; she seemed to us to be made of every creature's highest and most intellectual best.

There is no doubt that, to the schoolgirl, Miss Paine's first aspect was that of the moralist. We were afraid of her. *Le fou rire* died at her light step toward the classroom, and, little prigs! no doubt we snatched and proffered many an aspiration newborn in her presence to challenge her goodwill. But that instinctive fear of the inflexible spirit in her wore away. She was beautifully kind. Her sense of humor balanced her sense of responsibility, and some of us remember with joy a dress rehearsal of an ill-fitting and too-ambitious play when extreme costumes had been sent us, and with our spindle shanks and plumed hats we were more cockatoo than courtier (even the egg of *Chantecler* had not then been laid), and our moralist, our mentor, our preceptress fell into hysterics of her own and showed how human she could be. After that we began to guess that, when things were funny, she had delighted ecstasies even as our own. For serious things were too uni-

formly expected of her, chiefly because she looked the part of weight and wisdom. Nature had settled it that she should move perpetually in the mask of an age greater than her own. She had an old-fashioned face, the face of miniatures and frontispieces to wise books, the womanly suggestion of the Dante-George Eliot-Savonarola mask, so strongly, almost coarsely sketched in them, so feminized in her. And her gray-blue eyes, direct always, and stern upon occasion, had a peculiar spark in them, the ray, the light that shone from Charlotte Brontë's face. She was a very little woman, round-wristed, small of hand. She could not do athletic things, but what she essayed to bring her into closer touch with the outdoor life of a growing world, she did perfectly. Summer days in Exeter saw her rowing on the lovely river, feathering her oar with a finished grace. She knew the haunts of the shyest flowers. How many of us owe to her the first bright moment of discovery! She walked by instinct to the dwelling place of fern and orchid; the warm day is yet living when she took us on pilgrimage to "spring beauty," and the hazy autumn afternoon, lovely child of a

frosty morning, when she showed us the meadow dark-stained with gentian. There were still cold nights when she pointed out the stars. Her interests were as multitudinous as the stars themselves; it seems not possible to find any corner where light and life were reigning where she did not turn the lens of eagerness. It was not the avid greediness of the accumulator vaunting himself of the "intellectual life," but the intense curiosity born of wonder of the soul who passionately desires to understand God's world. She was fain of the universe itself, its "supreme energies." She knew and dwelt in "the glory and the dream."

In those days of her young womanhood she was deep in books, — Herbert Spencer, the latest and most abstruse science, comparative religion, the ancient epics, great novels — nothing unworthy ever, nothing trivial and vain, but with nice crusty bites round the edges of fantasy, fairy tales, the *Hunting of the Snark*. Nobody was ever less self-conscious in preference for the highest and finest, nobody so far removed from prigdom.

She was always hoping for a little, a very little more strength, that she might write at last. In

1882, she had published a thin green book, *Bird Songs of New England*, poetical precursor of the "how-to-know" manuals for learning to observe. The unpretending prefatory note says that the "verses make no claim as poetry." She was trying to "enable readers to identify some of the birds for themselves." Yet the verse has a sweet intent, a gentle pace. She likes to talk about the birds, to talk to them. To the wood pewee she says:—

> "In the winter thou dost cheer us,
> But, when happier birds are near us,
> Thou dost sadly sing apart."

And this is the black-throated green warbler:—

> "The greenwood is a cathedral,
> And through its arches dim
> A little bird sings at noontide
> A song which is like a hymn.
> It rises through the summer air
> Like the voice of a holy nun in prayer:
> 'Hear me, Saint Theresa!'"

Afterwards, under the pseudonym of "Eliza Chester," came *Girls and Women*, *Chats with Girls on Self-Culture* and *The Unmarried Woman*. These were all, in their way, a part of

her teaching. She was absolutely concerned with the desire to turn in her power toward the good of the whole, and for those chiefly who were unformed and struggling. If she had not herself worked so hard and found the enterprise so great, if life had allowed her the luxury of being merely a learned woman, nobody can say what high intellectual scope her work might have taken. Here again was George Eliot's Dorothea sinking the glowing dream in small realities: "The effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

Now, so desirous was she of "making the blind to see" the beauties of right conduct and the lovely world, that she wrote familiarly, in a conversational way, for those who might not be drinking out of the big, splendid chalice of insight and knowledge, but must ever thirst without little cups suited to their grasp. For sometime in her life, it is

impossible to say how, the great change and flowering had come out of it. She had perhaps heard God out of the Burning Bush of some sacrificial revelation, or she had climbed that slow and arduous steep, through dull obedience, through faith to sudden illumination from the very light of His near countenance. She had begun to "see God." And having learned that One sitteth behind the clouds, unchanging save in different radiant aspects of His love, she did not lose the comfort of it. She had found that her "Vindicator," the Vindicator of every atom, lives, and at the end justice shall reign with love. Those who knew her most familiarly may be able to say that her ideals were always the same, but perhaps some of us may guess without presumption that at first she upheld the truth, the rectitude, the stern duty paramount in George Eliot whom she loved. Her worship of the truth was a very clean, whole-souled passion. She did no dickering with it, splitting hairs with the fastidiousness that drives the lax to frenzy, but she told it splendidly. She says she was shy; but for conscience' sake she would have been ready to die at the sword's point — or whatever

rougher torture the modern world has substituted for clean thrusts. And then sometime, somehow, she learned transcendently and breathed only in the knowledge that the one name is Love, — that there is, in fact, in a universe "bound by gold chains about the feet of God" nothing *but* love, which is our small word for the integrity of the whole. More and more she extended her fibres among her kind. We know well enough the sort of life she would have chosen — days on the river, pilgrimage to the haunts of leaf and bird; this in the greenwood days until even the wood things are some of them housed, and then hours of study by the fire, books and thought. This was the minimum of what a woman of her attainment might have been expected to crave as suitable daily food, — and beyond that the higher heaven of travel, music and the sister arts. But when she settled down at Groveland to "take in sail," it was no well-earned repose. She did the humblest daily tasks with a painstaking care the more marvelous because they were not her kind of task, and she had to put into them an amount of energy she never needed at the microscope or the printed page. She concerned

herself with Village Improvement and the Historical Society. She was a public-spirited citizen and a good neighbor, and there is no doubt that she looked with almost pathetic awe and admiration on women who could turn out frosting and embroidery — not that these arts were so desirable in themselves, but because the easy secret of them was hidden from her. Nature had made her in a certain way, and for certain tasks. God, the One of Secret Knowledge, working through her imperious sense of duty, denied her always the full exercise of her natural gifts. It was as if she had been called upon to learn the way of perfect obedience as she conceived it; to pour every drop of blood she had into human service. "The things of a man for which we visit him," says Emerson, "were done in the dark and cold." Those were still, dark years at Groveland, as cold as a winter frost. But now the singing of birds has come. The mortal part of her has died, and we cannot help feeling there is one star the more, and that all such stars in whose immortal, young company she finds herself have time to sing together.

As the years went on, her rich hair faded, her

face fell into the inevitable lines, — noble ones, all of them, — but beauty, ineffable because it breathed from faculties sweetly harmonized, made her aura and her crown. Age — what she called age, though she died at sixty-four — seemed to be her blossoming time. For all her homespun duties, the life of high achievement never flagged. After she had retired from teaching, she gave some private lectures in Boston and New York, on the Greek Tragedies, the Siegfried Idyll, the Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach, and to see her come into the lecture room was to feel that you were looking at a portrait, a lady of the olden time: for hardly any such delicate survival exists in the grotesque rejuvenescence of to-day. Her soft black silk dress was made according to a vogue irrevocably past, probably not that she especially wished it so, but that it hardly occurred to her that fashions were gone by; her white lace fichu was held by the little Psyche pin so many classrooms knew as her only ornament. She was the picture of a rare simplicity.

The simplicity was a part of her. After the publication of one of her books, Mr. Henry A. Clapp,

then dramatic critic of the Boston *Advertiser*, called on her to carry the tribute of his admiration. He said afterwards, evidently having suggested that the book might be the stepping-stone to something more ambitious, — "But she wants nothing — literally nothing." She had learned to want nothing — but to fulfill the will of God.

These colloquial little books of hers are no index of what she could have done if she had made her sacrifice to art and not to life. Her letters are full of spontaneous beauties, small phrases exquisitely expressed, like this, written in a long-past winter, —

"There is a rushing wind to-night, and the universe is one great crystal, my little warm room its only flaw."

Natural sights and, until she became deaf, sounds, form the charming calendar she shares with kindred minds.

"Do you not think," she writes, "flowers are a guarantee of the ever-brooding love in a special way?"

In October, 1909, when she was far from well, and weighed down by calamity if it had not been for her radiant certainties, she writes: —

"How wonderful the clear cool skies are! When we were young at Norton how we used to enjoy the long walks on such days as these! But now, though I hardly go out of my yard, the cup of beauty seems to be always overflowing, so that I do not need to go away to find it."

Here was a woman old in that she had lost her physical strength, her hearing, three quarters of her sight, and she was illogically filled with a rapturous content. She who had been caught up by music to the upper heaven could not hear it. She who had studied art in form and color all her life dwelt in a quiet country village, doing common tasks so consecrated by her intention that the mind marvels to think of them — and all the time she seemed to be inspired by a fervor of obedience. In 1909 she wrote: —

"I thought I appreciated Tintern Abbey when I was a girl, but I had not *lived* it then; but now I have been literally led 'from joy to joy' for more than sixty years, and I know what it means."

In 1908 she wrote that she had "been reviewing all the fine poetry I ever learned, to be prepared against days of greater dimness. It has

always been hard for me to learn by heart, and I hardly have courage for new conquests now, but I find reviewing easy. I have reviewed twenty chapters of the Bible, most of them learned at Norton, and I can't tell you how grateful I am for that early drill."

The most religious of women, she had perhaps no formulated faith. The whole thing was too big. To pack it into a creed would have been to snap the mould. In her youth her mind had stirred vigorously toward liberal thought, a grievous state of things when all her home affiliations were orthodox and every breaking of a common bond must have brought tears and blood. But the beauty of her later life was that, whatever her habit of thought, in the expression of it she seemed to have come home to rest. The mother-speech of formulated religion now sprang naturally to her lips. In the printed pages that follow, what must have been in terms of her own mind the Unknowable becomes Our Heavenly Father. Once she had at least believed, because her seeing eyes showed her the way the universe was made, its unassailable integrity; but now she felt the most intimate

personal love in what is within us and without us, in even the most brutal circumstance the divine intent.

She had had her days when, her back against the everlasting verities, she was stable as a rock in certainty of the dutiful deed required. But this rock of resolution was to be covered by the leafage of a gracious leniency toward human nature as it is, — even toward herself. In one so strong of will, moreover, it was reasonable that the unbendingness of personal resistance should have bred something like pride, the child of self-reliance, the pride that is, she humbly owns, so hard to tell from self-respect. And it showed itself in a queer little way only, a pathetic, childlike way. She did not "like to take things." Tangible gifts frightened her. She would let you walk a mile to get her a flower from the roadside, but at the nosegay bought with money she looked serious. Nobody quite knew why this was, perhaps she least of all. But at last even pride was put under her feet, and she accepted the most lavish service, beautifully given, with a perfect gratitude and humility.

Shall we dare to think from what root flowered the brave, fine blossoms of this book? Courage and cheerfulness do not come by wishing. When a body is in the decline of its normal powers, when duty exists without the strength to do it, when the brain is keenly as ever aware that beauty goes flowing on while the dim eyes blink at it — then the fight is on indeed. The whole body, every atom of it, is tending downward. It is mortal, and mortality — the fluent circle of it without — claims its own. "Let me," it beseeches at last, "return to the dust whence I came, for I, too, am dust, and there only is my kinship." But sitting aloft in sublimest health over the failing powers of this woman was the soul, insisting on every jot of the old obedience from nerve and muscle that cried for rest. Whatever blackness encompassed her mortal mind, from her lips came the more clearly the brave cry of Forward! She had come to the Dark Tower, but she was like that other —

> "Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
> And blew."

And is it not true of all those who have come to the Dark Tower in such a spirit that there is not

one who has failed to plant a banner on it to hearten the rest of us on our way?

In Miss Paine's last illness she looked like an emaciated saint. Francis of Assisi after his spiritual and bodily warfare could not have been more beautiful to the seeing eye. Day by day, instant by instant in all the sacrificial years, the soul had been moulding the body to a mask so full of heavenly life, so alien to decay that Death himself might have foregone his triumph and stood aside in awe to let the angels claim it. At last she had gone elsewhere leaving us the ineffable legacy of her belief in us. For there was one part of her temperamental life, very beautiful, almost piercing in its simplicity, that characterized her most,— faith in the friends she loved, almost a fervor of admiration for them. Toward human error she was ever mild of speech, but her appreciations came with a torrential rush. The smallest right achievement seemed marvelous in her eyes, and by some alembic those she loved were even in their outer lendings not only beloved but beautiful. She had the great gift of admirations, and the souls she had once seen walked evermore sacred to her, under a chrism

of loyalty. She was ever chanting their deserts. She put their faults swiftly aside like a base image she feared to look upon. Another woman, a poet, has seen how this might be: —

"If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own life was sore.
If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their memory more."

She forgave divinely.

And at the end, when those nearest to her said she was dead, it was to add the words, "Who will believe in us now?"

ALICE BROWN.

OLD PEOPLE

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I

GREETING OLD AGE

"It will be like a summer night to grow old," says Clara, in *Charles Auchester*. But Clara was almost a child. And Miss Sheppard herself was not much past twenty when she wrote the book. If she had discovered a truth, it was by insight and not by experience. Is it the truth? Some of us have a stout conviction which has weathered many a gale that the ideal is the only reality; but veterans understand that to pull a steady oar always, whether the tide and wind and current are with us, or whether the tide and wind and current are against us, is the only way to make the reality ideal.

A friend says that one of the most charming delegates to the biennial convention of women's clubs in California in 1902 was a lady past ninety years of age. She says that no one took a keener or more intelligent interest in all the subjects under

discussion, or contributed more to the social enjoyment of the gathering. "And her dress was delightful," adds my friend. "It was jaunty,—really jaunty,—and yet no one thought of criticising it as too youthful. It suited her face and manner perfectly."

Clearly this dear old lady was not old in the ordinary sense: though we are in the habit of thinking that ninety is a line beyond which youth cannot pass. If we knew her whole story, we should probably find that she spent many hours of weakness and weariness in solitude, though she still had the vigor and the spirit to give unstinted measure of life and blessing to other people. She may have been born brave and cheerful, and she may have inherited a sound body and a sound mind; but she could never have preserved her courage and her winsomeness to ninety years unless she had fought well an active fight against selfishness and weakness. She must have borne much nobly in loneliness in order to have the strength necessary to radiate sunshine among her fellow beings. Nobody is made of iron, and ninety years will test the stoutest constitution as well as the stoutest heart.

It is glorious to know that such a woman as this has lived. It is inspiring to think of Doctor Edward Everett Hale, at eighty years of age, standing on the steps of the Massachusetts State House at midnight in December and stretching out his arms in benediction over the multitude that had assembled to watch the old century out and the new century in. We feel that we too have springs of perennial youth within us in the power to be cheerful and courageous. And yet most of us face the fact that such men and women are exceptional, and that we cannot ourselves hope to rival their feats. Most of us have to begin our battle with old age before we are fifty, and yield inch after inch of ground with every succeeding year.

Must it be a battle? How shall we meet old age? Is it possible to give old age a greeting? Can we say, with Browning, —

> "Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made"?

Shall we not grow old more gracefully if we yield to the inevitable than if we fight against it? What is the golden mean between rebellion

and pusillanimity? Can there be such a thing as courageous submission?

Old age always comes to us before we expect it. The Autocrat says his friend the Professor declared that he "did n't mind" his students calling him "the old man," but that it was quite another matter to overhear a young stranger talking of him as a "very nice old gentleman." Now, of course it is a shock to find that other people count us old before we have ourselves discovered our age; and yet who would go to meet old age halfway? What counsellor would advise us to anticipate the meeting? Nevertheless, we must not shrink from it. We must even believe that it is good; if we trust in the Divine Providence, we must believe it is best. Let us not use the figure of a battle, then. We are not to fight with old age as a foe, and a foe foreordained to victory, but we are to walk down the declivity of life with old age as a companion. Youth and maturity showed us splendid sights as we climbed the hill, and old age will show us different, but inexpressibly beautiful visions as we walk down the descent. We are not to resist and be dragged down the hill, our eyes blinded with

fighting. Nor are we to fall weakly into the arms of our conductor and be carried down without an effort to look at the beauty about us. We are to *walk;* and to walk erect and steadfastly, and not to slip will take all the courage and strength of soul that we might foolishly waste in an unavailing struggle with our unconquerable companion. We were not to hurry breathlessly to the top of the hill where he was awaiting us, for then we should have missed glorious prospects as the horizon grew wider and wider. But when we have met him, even though we must turn reluctantly from what seems the supreme vision of the summit, even though we had hoped to gain higher peaks, — as we all do, for the view from the summit we actually reach is often circumscribed by frowning rocks and forests, — then we are to walk courageously at his side, trusting in his beneficence, keeping pace with him, and rejoicing in the new beauty which every turn in the pathway unfolds before us. The pathway is a difficult one, thorny and stony. There are those who say that the descent of a mountain is harder than the climbing of it. The courage and cheerfulness that seemed our birthright on the other

side must now be won by active effort when we feel too weak to be active. But if we have the courage to hold our heads erect, we shall see vistas opening into that country whose glory eye hath not seen. We climb the mountain on the landward side; but the descent is toward the infinite sea. Who would miss the sparkle of the distant waves as each step brings us nearer? Who would turn his head away discontentedly and try to find some byway leading back to the other side of the mountain? But the new visions are only for the courageous. When the moment comes to any of us that we first realize we are old, then, as never before, we must take as our watchwords "Courage" and "Cheerfulness." Most of us struggle hopelessly for a while, exhausting ourselves in vain, and forget that real courage demands that we conquer ourselves, and not that we conquer old age, who is simply our conductor to a larger life than that we know.

The downward path is not only rough with briers, but sometimes it is enveloped in heavy mists which shut out the sustaining visions. Some of us cannot see the shining sea before us with the

white-winged bark ready to carry us to lands of undreamed-of beauty. We feel the briers and we stumble over the stones, and we do not know whither the path is leading. We may not be to blame for the clouded vision. No one can choose exactly the form of his discipline in life. But this is true: if we bravely walk erect, we shall, from time to time, get glimpses of the wonderful unseen world, and the certainty of the glory will help us to pass through the darkest parts of the way; while, if we mournfully look only at the ground, we shall miss this strengthening and refreshment. And further,—we do not walk alone: even if the cloud never lifts, even if, for ourselves, it seems easier to bear despondency than to make the effort to be brave, yet we must remember what a cheerful voice may mean to our fellows who are struggling through the mist beside us. We must, we will, take courage and be cheerful for the sake of others as well as for ourselves.

So much we feel in our hours of insight; but then, alas, we meet our practical difficulties, and each one of them seems insurmountable. We were sublime, and we descend straightway to the ridicu-

lous. In the blue-and-white penny pass-book that Sentimental Tommy put surreptitiously into the hands of Ivie McLean, dear Miss Ailie writes that she had sent a letter to the editor of the *Mentor*, asking up to what age he thought a needy gentlewoman had a right to teach. "The answer was not given, but her comment on it told everything. 'I asked him to be severely truthful, so that I cannot resent his reply. But if I take his advice, how am I to live? And if I do not take it, I fear I am but a stumbling-block in the way of true education.'" For Miss Ailie had to own that she could not stretch her fingers as she used on the piano, and that her French was slipping from her, and that decimals, always mysterious to her, grew more unfathomable every day. Tommy and Gavinia listened, and Tommy said, "I hear no laughing."

To be sure, Miss Ailie was delivered from her perplexities by the delightful Ivie McLean, — "I, Ivie, take thee, Ailie," — though the ordeal of the courtship for the sensitive and conscientious maiden must have been scarcely less severe than the mediæval test of burning ploughshares. She who was too truthful to accept the beloved lover until she

had confessed first, that she was fifty-one, instead of forty-nine, as she had led him to believe; second, that not liking to admit that she was growing deaf, she had sometimes answered him at random when she had not heard what he said; third, that she had discovered from a story-book that she had formed old-maidish habits, and these she could not conquer. Last of all came a silent confession; she left the room, and came back looking years older, having removed most of her hair. "Though it was my own hair," she says, "but it came out when Kitty died."

The mode whereby Miss Ailie was delivered from her difficulties is not the usual mode of deliverance for maiden ladies of fifty-one; but the question Miss Ailie asks, "How am I to live?" is the practical difficulty that confronts three fourths of the human race at the approach of age. In one of his voyages, Darwin describes some race, the Patagonians, I think, who promptly put their old women to death when they were past hard work, and he tells us that the women tried their best to make the tribe believe they could work long after their strength failed, and that then they fled to the mountains

in the hope of escape. But the men were inexorable. Though, in civilized countries, a decisive stroke does not cut the Gordian knot, life itself presents the same problem for solution: How are the physically incapable to support a physical existence? The world is rich enough, and even tender-hearted enough, to solve the problem; but most of us are not like the Patagonian women who seem to have valued life for its own sake merely, and there is often poignant suffering in receiving charity; indeed, it is only when pride is fully conquered that even the most loving charity can be accepted without some mixture of sharp pain. So, instead of making the best of age, we meet it as a foe, and fight against it.

I remember a story of an old man employed in digging ditches, whose wrath was unbounded when he was offered work at a boy's wages. "A boy's wages, when I have worked all my life!" And yet he could do only a boy's work, and his employer, but for sympathy, would have preferred a strong boy to the feeble and rheumatic creature, over whom he must always keep a careful watch. If the poor fellow could only have looked at the

reverse of his condition, he might have been glad to think he could still earn the wages of a boy.

I know an honest old man who said, "I don't think I can see to build your cupboard as you want it built." The work was given him nevertheless; but, faithful as he was, he was twice as long in doing it as he would once have been, and, accordingly, he asked only half-price for his time. Then he said quietly, "Thank you for giving me the chance to do this." He was walking gently down the slope of years.

Stewart White tells in *The Forest* of a great-grandfather of eighty-five who still felled trees with an unerring stroke. He struck such a blow as he might have struck in his prime, and then he waited. He waited patiently for a long interval, and then he struck another blow with the same precision.

These men realized Emerson's thought,—

> "It is time to be old,
> To take in sail,"

and they had learned to

> "Economize the failing river,"

and

> "Not the less revere the Giver."

It is, of course, a duty, as well as a delight, to keep young as long as we can; but even to do that effectually we must know how to accept our limitations. Yet sometimes there are circumstances which make the struggle against them sublime. Mrs. Stowe, in describing a slave-market, tells us of a broken old woman who begs the purchaser of her bright-eyed young boy — the last of many children to be sold away from her — to buy her too, and she eagerly declares that, old as she looks, she is still able to do hard work. She cannot deny her rheumatism: "But, laws — dat 's nuffin'." She can still scrub. She stretches out her withered arms and tries to persuade the purchaser that they are all the stronger because they are no longer shapely. I suppose we have all seen and loved old people who were staggering under burdens too heavy to be borne, trying to sustain others whom they loved, and trying, when the loved ones were all gone, so to hold themselves up that they might not in their turn become a burden to those unable to bear it. It is not to such people that we should talk of limitations. When a man plunges into the water to save another from drowning, we do not

call out to him to be careful not to take cold; we look about to see what we can do to help.

When Agamemnon entrusts to the old man the letter by which he hopes to save Iphigenia, he bids him go quickly, "plying the foot, yielding nought to old age." The poor old man's power is not equal to his zeal, and his mission fails; but who does not love him the better for trying to do the task that was beyond him?

The Peleus of Euripides, when a great-grandfather, saves Andromache and her boy from the plots of their enemies. When he appears on the scene, "directing his aged foot in haste," the cruel Menelaus says contemptuously, "I bear thy words easily; for thou hast a voice like as a shadow, being incapable of aught except only to talk." But the intrepid Peleus, ignoring him, calls out, "Lead on hither, child, standing under my arms; and thou, too, O wretched one" (to Andromache). ". . . Thou shalt not bring forward the timid words of women. Go on; who will touch you? He will touch you to his cost if he does. For *in behalf of the gods*, we have a command over horse troops, and many heavy armed soldiers in Phthia.

And I am still erect, and not an old man, as you think; but looking in the face of such a man as this alone, I, though an old man, will erect a trophy over him. *For an old man, if he be valiant,* is better than many youths. What profits it, being a coward, to have a good body?"

And Menelaus dares not oppose the hero.

In the cause of love, of justice, we are not to think of limitations. "An old man, *if he be valiant,* is better than many youths."

II

CHANGE AND BREADTH

With the failing of the normal powers, there usually comes a change of circumstance. The musician becomes deaf and can no longer conduct his orchestra. His income is cut off, and he goes to live with his son in a distant state. His son loves him, but his son's wife and children are almost strangers to him. His surroundings are new, and his habits must be changed. The mother, who has lived all her life in the country, a power in the village where she knows every person she meets, is no longer able to manage her own housekeeping. She must make her home with her daughter who teaches in a city, and exchange her cottage in the midst of trees and shrubbery for a dingy little apartment in an undesirable street where she knows no one. A Colonel Newcome loses his money when he is too old and feeble to earn a living, and he is received into the brotherhood of the Grey Friars. A good master dies, and the servants, who

are too stiff and rheumatic to be wanted in new places, must turn to the almshouse. An efficient, independent woman, who has directed the affairs of a neighborhood, becomes blind, and must submit henceforward to a companion who shall guide her every footstep.

Are these changes easy to bear? It is not easy even for the young to alter the whole mode of life, especially when the change is not a voluntary one. And in the case of the old, to be taken up by the roots and transplanted to a soil that is perhaps uncongenial may well have terrors.

Have such clouds a silver lining? I remember hearing a middle-aged lady say, years ago, that she looked upon the necessity that had forced her away from her beautiful country home to earn laboriously a somewhat irregular livelihood in the city, as one of the greatest blessings that had ever been bestowed upon her. "For," she said, "in the country I was as narrow as a crack."

"Life is growth and growth is change," Miss Larcom sang. We all realize that for the young and even for the middle-aged, — but for the old! We hardly believe growth is possible for the old.

Of course there comes a time when the powers absolutely fail; but for the courageous that day may be postponed. Something is possible long after the usual work of life has to be suspended, something, too, that is often of a higher quality than the work of one's prime. The dreaded changes that seem so cruel in old age usually ripen the character instead of causing it to decay, at least when they befall an earnest soul.

"To make habitually a new estimate, that is greatness," Emerson said. Now, in new circumstances we are forced to make new estimates. We must sift the chaff of our lives from the wheat. The process is painful, but the result is worth the pain.

"My daughter rules me with a rod of iron," said an old lady, with a cheerful laugh. The daughter, somewhat aggrieved, explained in private that, with failing powers, her mother could no longer do as she had once done. When she raised her tea-cup in a trembling hand, the tea splashed over the tablecloth; moreover, her dim eyesight put an end to perfection in her dress. How could she really see when she was untidy? "I know she is

really neat," said the daughter anxiously, "for I remember her in the past; but the grandchildren can't know that, and I will not have them think of her as a careless old woman." So the daughter ruled with "a rod of iron," and the wise old lady, though she occasionally allowed herself the satisfaction of a sharp remark, yet on the whole consented with cheerfulness to the rule. She even allowed her daughter to introduce modern innovations into the time-honored etiquette of her life, and she really welcomed labor-saving inventions in the housekeeping. She had to do old things in a new way, but she adapted herself to the new situation so well that the very alertness of mind demanded of her in order to make such accommodation possible lent her manner the charming vivacity that delighted everybody who knew her; there was a sparkle about her age such as we commonly associate only with youth.

Professor William Davis of Harvard, in his fascinating lectures on Physiography, used to talk about the effect of giving new work to an old river. For instance, after explaining that cascades belong naturally to young rivers, and that as the

stream wears down the rock to a level, they disappear, leaving the water to meander lazily over the plain, he would add that the whole scene might be changed by the upheaval of the river-bed. Then the old river had to begin anew to cut the rock down to a level, and waterfalls once more appeared naturally in its course. So in the case of my old lady's vivacity. New work had been given to her in her old age, and it lent her in turn the sparkle of youth.

The expositors of mental healing tell us that it is contraction which deadens us. The sensitive and weak — and, we may add, the old — always have a tendency to contract, to withdraw into themselves and to cease from active effort. "My dear woman," wrote a lively lady to a distant friend, "what is this you tell me about becoming deaf? I thought only obstinate people were deaf!" Well, who knows how much truth there was in that? The inflexibility of mind that makes one obstinate might certainly so act on the nerves as to contract the blood-vessels supplying the ears, and starve the cells until they no longer respond to the stimulus of sound.

Now a change that forces us out of ruts, that breaks up old habits and calls on us to form new ones, almost always helps us to expand, unless, indeed, we resist it with all our might, in which case we may contract to the point of induration; and so, no doubt, changes of circumstance, as we grow old, tend not only to give us breadth of character but to keep us young.

Change being so clearly a blessing, must we choose it? To most of us, even to those of us who have loved variety in early life, quiet is most attractive in old age. It seems as if we had a right to a resting-place between the active life and the new life awaiting us. Browning says: —

> "And I shall thereupon
> Take rest ere I be gone
> Again on my adventure strange and new."

It seems as if the old had a right to live their last days among their familiar friends, to sit in a comfortable easy-chair by their own fireside, to cease from struggle, and to receive the glad ministry of affectionate and reverent youth. It seems furthermore as if they could do more good to old friends than to new ones. To some old people this interval

of rest is granted: though it is almost always brief, because life is exacting and usually taxes our full powers, whether these are great or small. The rich can sometimes command such a resting-place, the poor very seldom. Ought we to wish for it, or should we vigorously seek for the change that so often gives us breadth?

Each must answer this question for himself. The temperament, the character, the circumstances of each one must decide it. I am not at all inclined to recommend any one to go out of his way in search of discipline for its own sake. If a peaceful old age by a beloved fireside is vouchsafed to one who is tired of the stir of life, it would certainly be ungrateful not to rejoice in it. We need have no fear that all the discipline we really need will not be offered us without our going out of the way to seek it. But when we see clearly that a change in our peaceful life is necessary, let us accept it willingly, remembering that it holds for us the possibility of a life that is broader and better.

III

THE PASSING OF THE GLORY

When Wordsworth wrote, —

> "But yet I know,
> Where'er I go,
> That there hath passed away a glory from the earth,"

he was not an old man. No one has ever interpreted the great ode as having been inspired by the decay of the senses. The reason, to Wordsworth, that

> "nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower,"

is that the progress of life has dimmed the recollection of "that imperial palace whence we came." It is a mental and moral change, not a physical one, of which he speaks.

Yet there is a physical change that comes to most of us and gives poignancy to our understanding of Wordsworth's lines. We talk proudly in our youth of our independence of the senses, not so

much as dreaming how much of our higher life is due to them. We are quite right, of course, in saying that they are not essential to us, and Helen Keller was born to prove that love and genius united can bridge the chasm between the clod and the angel absolutely without their help. But for most of us the failure of a single sense in even a slight degree casts a shadow over the universe. We are surprised and puzzled; we think the cloud will pass. But it settles more and more heavily, like a pall.

> "The rainbow comes and goes,
> And lovely is the rose,"

yet now the eye has grown dim, it is too weak to look up at the rainbow, and it does not catch the flush of the opening rosebud among the leaves; it is only the full-blown rose that arrests it. I have a friend who has become deaf. She says that the solid earth seemed to be slipping from under her as the sense of hearing gradually grew less and less acute. She had to readjust herself to the whole world, — to things as well as to persons. The fatigue from this readjustment acted upon her nerves and threatened her whole physical system. She could

not believe that the loss of one faculty was to entail the loss of others until she actually found it so. She had felt the transcendent delight of music; still, she is not what is called musical, and she thought that by and by she should be able to bear the loss of a part of the heavenly harmony in a full orchestra or chorus, though she found with gratitude that musical sounds will reach an ear too dull to catch the gossip of the hour. She fancied that she could replace music more and more by the beauty of the out-door world. The two had always seemed to appeal to the same inner sense. And then one day she suddenly became aware that a part of the charm of nature had also gone. She sat on the grass beside a friend, at the parting of woodland ways in June, tippling on wild strawberries, and she saw the sunset lights through a vista of beeches, and she felt the soft breeze on her cheek, as it brought her the fragrance of pine boughs and sweet-fern, and she was happy. And then her friend raised a hand and said, "Hush! there is the wood-thrush!" and she could not hear it. She was no longer "lord of the senses five." Four senses were ministering to her at the

moment, and she knew and loved the song of the thrush which she was nevermore to hear. One note in the chord of nature had been lost. The harmony would not be so rich again.

What is springtime in a painted world? "The glory and the freshness of a dream" is gone, and we say, with a different meaning from that of Wordsworth, —

> "Turn wheresoe'er I may,
> By night or day,
> The things that I have seen I now can see no more."

It is merciful that in most cases the senses fail slowly, so that we adapt ourselves gradually to their lack. I know old people who do not seem to be aware that they have lost the power to see and hear as in youth. Of course they know that their grandchildren can thread a needle or hear a whisper better than they can; but they do not realize that the world the youngsters look at is shot through and through with colors they themselves no longer see, or that when the old and the young are listening to music together, the old hear only the fundamental tones, while the young are ravished by the rich chords formed by unnumbered

overtones. They do perhaps perceive that neither nature nor music will now sweep them away with such sudden delight as of old; but they think this is due to the slower pulse of age, when in fact they do not now see the visions or hear the sounds that once so moved them.

The failure of the senses is not, however, so gradual as to be imperceptible in all cases. Crises come to many lives on the threshold of old age. Novelists choose, and rightly, to describe the drama of youth which ends in hope for this life; but it is probable that both the inner and the outer experience of most people is fuller of dramatic struggle and suffering at about fifty than at any other time. Then their parents die, and they are anxious about their children, and less hopeful of achieving material ends as they find their powers beginning to fail. Work increases on their hands, not only for themselves, but for those older and those younger. They are in the thickest of the fight of life. There comes a strain, and they have not the strength to meet it. Yet they must meet it. And in the struggle a sense fails them. When this change comes suddenly, it is felt most keenly.

Such losers know what they have lost. All such losses are more unbearable in the beginning, before there has been time for adjustment to them.

Now those whose senses have been sources of the greatest delight suffer most in losing them; and yet, paradoxically, if they have used them aright, the delight remains. For example, two men lounging on a hillside look at the same landscape with strong, young eyes. One sees it carelessly, and notices little. He looks perhaps at a passing wagon or a heap of rubbish as often as at the distant sea or the springing flowers at his feet. The other catches every varying tint of the ocean, every beautiful shadow from the moving clouds, every glint of sunshine through the over-arching trees, every exquisite tendril of the grapevine on the wall. When their eyes fail them, which loses most? Physically, the one who saw most. But, on the other hand, a mind so enriched as his has a treasure that cannot be touched by decay. If both these men should suffer blindness, and be led to the same spot again, which would see it most truly? Even a new scene must be more beautiful to the one who had once discerned beauty truly. If a

friend says, "There is an apple-tree in blossom, and a bluebird has alighted on it," he sees the tree and the bird as if his eyes were open. But if he had never cared for apple-blossoms, except to wonder how many barrels of apples he should have to sell, he might not be able to recall the petals' lovely rose.

Sight is more than a question of true lens and thrilling nerve. An old man of dim vision, if he has looked for beauty all his life, will find more loveliness in a landscape than a young man, with perfect eyes, looking at the scene with equal earnestness, even though in time the young man might learn to see all his companion cherishes. Complete beauty is not often revealed in a flash. It sometimes seems to be, I know. When the train approaching Lausanne emerges from the last long Alpine tunnel, and Lake Geneva bursts at once on the vision, with the line of snow-covered Savoy Alps beyond it, the summits touched with the crimson of sunset, the shining clouds and mountains reflected in softer colors in the lake, the whole world transfigured by the pulsating atmosphere which holds the Alpine glow, changing

moment by moment from silver to rose and from rose to violet, the most stolid men, under the sudden shock of the glory, sometimes melt into tears. They see more than they know they see. I suppose no recollection, no imagination, could give a blind man all that is granted to one who sees in that single instant. He could remember what he *knew* he saw, but not the splendor he received unconsciously. This supreme glory does pass when the sense fails. No philosophy can save the old from loss. The fact of deprivation must be faced. Recollection is not vision.

But such a vision as that of the Swiss lake is rare in any life. It is still true that all the beauty of most scenes is perceived slowly by the reverent, watching mind; and though there is a great difference in the power to see it in different young people, and many young people see more than many old ones, yet the same person, whose heart has remained pure, sees more actually at forty than he saw at twenty; and even with the dim eyes of seventy, he sees what he did not at twenty. Yet no one knows so well as the one who has watched for beauty all his life that he has lost something real

when the sense fails. His recollection is a blending of anguish and blessedness. In the beginning, it seems as if the anguish would overpower the blessedness. Whether it conquers in the end will depend on the soul within.

I have seen children in the meadows and woods in May, when the larks and bluebirds and sparrows and thrushes were singing rapturously, who never once stopped picking flowers to listen to a single strain. I do not mean that the "blended notes of spring" did not enhance the charm of the moment. I am sure all this wild music sank into their hearts, and that they were better for having heard it, though unconsciously. And yet a deaf Thoreau, rambling through the same paths, would recognize a certain charm in the woods withheld from them. The scene might be as silent as a painted scene, but when a thrush flitted across the pathway, the deaf man would feel the rustle of the branches as he had once known it, and he would follow in his heart the song the bird sang, follow it actually. For the children, the happiness of the day would be unalloyed. To the man there would be a higher happiness,

though its undercurrent would be pain. Perhaps a part of the sense is withdrawn, lest we should be overpowered by the "intolerable radiancy" which perfect senses would add to the rich vision of maturity. When the sibylline leaves were first offered to the people, they were many in number. Then, as more and more of them were lost, the value of the remaining ones increased. And so it is with the senses of the old. A single note of a thrush brings back to them the whole forest, with its trees and ferns and mosses, the rich colors of the sunset shining through the arches of the pines like the windows of a vast cathedral; it brings back the feeling of the light breeze on the cheek, the murmuring of the leaves, the fragrance of innumerable living things, growing at our feet. A child may hear the full richness of the song that escapes the old man; but the child must hear the song a thousand times before it means to him what it means to the old man. How could we bear at once both kinds of beauty in their fullness?

The old are learning to do without this body. When the chrysalis can no longer hold the expanding soul, and breaks because of the strain within,

then, indeed, we may be ready for a finer body, with new senses, and we may be able to bear the blending of inner and outer beauty. We may be prepared for the beauty that no human eye has seen.

Have you ever thought how the loss of a sense gives us a great hope? If you had never had the sense of hearing, you could not know that the spring woods are full of melody. Having had it and having lost it, you know that all the birds are singing, though the silence about you is like that of death. Why, then, may you not believe that some unknown sense might open at your feet worlds of beauty of which you have never had a single hint? You look into the microscope and see a clear, empty field. You turn a screw the hundredth part of an inch, and the drop of water is peopled by myriads of forms of curious and exquisite life. Is not the change of death more than the turning of a screw? The most faithless must believe that even the outer world is a different thing to the butterfly from what it was to the worm.

Perhaps nobody can ever have felt the anguish of deafness as Beethoven did. "He would never

have written the high notes in the Hymn of Joy in the Ninth Symphony if he could have heard them," says a musical friend. "He would have known they were beyond any chorus." But what does that mean? He perceived harmonies above the reach of the human voice and it was a Hymn of *Joy*.

The glory of the senses passes indeed with youth; but there is a glory of age which shines when the senses have failed. I am not now speaking of the glory of a pure soul, which is always independent of the material, but simply of the kind of glory revealed to us at first through the senses, and afterwards woven into the fibre of our very life. The glory that comes from love and truth in the heart never passes away at all, but shines brighter and brighter to the end: though it is true that when the mind also fails, we cannot follow the soul. There may be a hidden life, full of meaning, that no one outside it can see. There may still be an inner glory. Here we must wait in reverent silence. We do not comprehend; but we must believe that the glory of the terrestrial is one and the glory of the celestial is another.

IV

WORK

Much of the best work of the world is done by men and women past sixty. It is true that great warriors are seldom very old; but great statesmen are seldom very young. Most people who are endowed by nature with a strong body and a strong mind, and who have lived rationally, find the years between sixty and seventy among the most fruitful of all. No one seriously doubts this in the case of mental and moral achievement, for, though the memory begins to be less powerful in these years, the judgment becomes stronger, experience is necessarily wider, all good habits formed earlier become more and more a part of the individual, and one is equipped with material that is quite out of the reach of young people. Hokusai says: "Since I was six years old I have been in the habit of drawing the shapes of objects. Toward my fiftieth year I published an infinity of designs; but I am not satisfied with anything I produced before my six-

tieth year. It is at my seventieth year that I am more or less able to understand the forms of birds, fishes, etc. . . . At the age of one hundred and ten, everything from my brush, whatever it is, may be full of life." I suppose, however, that every reader of these last words will smile at the vain optimism of Hokusai, and make the mental comment that if he had lived to be one hundred and ten, his palsied fingers would no longer have been able to guide the brush, however vigorous his conception might still have been. For though we have all known centenarians who have kept the strength of their mind and heart to the last, we have not known very old people who have had the physical powers necessary for good manual work.

Nevertheless, even in the matter of manual labor, I believe old people accomplish far more than we think, and that they could do still more if they had a little added encouragement. By this I do not mean that they have the strength of maturity, or that they should be urged to work or criticised for idleness. Technical skill, such as Hokusai prognosticated for himself, is so rare after sixty — though there are still many instances where it is

maintained for a decade or two longer — that it may be disregarded altogether in a discussion like this, intended to apply to the rank and file. But what I mean is that the judgment and experience which the old put into their work often more than compensates, even in manual labor, for the weakness of the hand and eye. For example, I have known many old ladies who had been accomplished seamstresses and who continued to set most beautiful stitches at eighty, though their hands were weak and their eyesight half gone, — stitches that their grand-daughters, brought up in an age of sewing machines, tried in vain to imitate. In such a case, we have the result of the long habit of beautiful work, and the judgment plays so small a part that the work is sometimes done when the mind is almost gone. It is excellent work, nevertheless, and contributes to the welfare of the world. I can hardly speak emphatically enough of the good that is done by some of my octogenarian friends who learned to sew in the days when all sewing had to be done by hand. They sit all day long in an armchair perhaps, too lame to walk out, too weak to stand, and one after another piece of work is

swiftly and silently completed for the busy people who have not time or strength or skill to sew for themselves. There is a smile on their placid faces as they work: for they know they are doing what is of use and doing it well, and usually they have pleasant thoughts of the friend for whom they are busy. Perhaps this is the last generation that will ever see such work done. Even the young women who learn to sew now are not forced to it so constantly that it becomes a second nature, and their hand will lose its cunning much sooner in consequence.

I have known a dear old lady almost ninety years of age who kept up her lifelong habit of cooking for her family, and to the last her cookery was the work of an artist. If I say that her mince-pies and her sugar gingerbread and her doughnuts were all incomparable, everybody in our village will know her name, for her food was not merely good, but actually the best. Now, though we may speak of cooking as a manual occupation, yet it is certainly something more than that. This dear old friend had very little bodily strength at the last. An incurable disease attacked her some years be-

fore her death, and during all these years, she was never once able to lie down. She slept sitting in her armchair, and she cooked sitting in her armchair. That she continued to cook well so that she could satisfy the wants of her beloved old husband and herself without the burden of a servant was the result of her long life of intelligent activity. Her judgment was good, not only because she had been endowed with a strong intellect to begin with, but because it was supplemented by character, and she had practiced faithfully what she knew to be best her whole life long.

One splendid old lady who lived to be ninety-one, spent her last dozen years traveling in Europe and the South, and wherever she went she taught new branches of industry. She was over eighty when she learned to crochet; but her work was so beautiful that the shawls she made were fit for heirlooms. She helped a poor Swiss woman to become independent for life by teaching her the art of crocheting these shawls. Wherever she went in the South and saw women wearing themselves out over fires to bake hot biscuit three times a day, she straightway set herself at work to

show them how to make the most excellent yeast bread.

A year ago, when I was driving through a neighboring village with some friends, we wished to climb a hill. The easiest way to reach it was through the vegetable garden of an old gentleman known to one of the party, and she asked the desired permission. As we passed the kitchen door, a handsome old lady came out and greeted us. It was Monday morning, and she was doing her own washing: yet I speak advisedly when I call her a lady. No one could deny that title to the tall, aristocratic-looking woman, with her gracious manners. Her beautiful gray hair was simply and becomingly arranged, her calico dress was neat and well-fitting. Her sleeves were rolled up above her elbows, and her strong, sinewy arms showed that she had worked all her life; but if she had put on a long-sleeved silk dress, I think she could have taken her place fittingly in any society in the land. She was a woman of intellect, and her conversation was full of acumen. I was astonished when my friend said she was nearly eighty years old. It is not every old lady of eighty who has

the strength to do washing. Furthermore, it is not every housekeeper who can be unembarrassed in receiving a party of strangers at ten o'clock on Monday morning, knowing that both her house and herself are in perfect order. Now this old lady was not strong. She died within the year. What she was able to achieve to the very last was the result of her cheerful, unremitting work all through her youth and middle age.

Because the women I have described could do so much in age, it must not be supposed that all women could equal them. Even of those who might have been their peers in middle life, and who had had a lifetime of experience to help them, many must have become disabled much earlier, and of course no woman could win distinction in household occupations who began her apprenticeship too late. Another very important consideration is that these women all worked in their own homes, and were untrammeled by directions or criticisms. They worked with regularity, it is true, and yet with a sense of perfect freedom. If they were tired and decided to rest, nobody would make any comment. If they chose to have bread

and milk for dinner, they acted according to their own good pleasure. If they were too weak to do the washing on Monday, it could be done on Tuesday equally well. If their eyes were too dim to sew on a rainy day, they could put by their needlework till the sun shone. I say all this because I feel that while the old are all the healthier and happier for working to their full strength in freedom, it is cruel to urge them, and I do not think younger people always understand that. It is not until we are weak ourselves that we are able to comprehend weakness. I have heard strong young women criticise some aged relative whose last years must be spent in their homes, declaring that half the infirmities of age could be avoided if the old would do a little wholesome work. This is partly true. Exercise is needed even when it requires an effort to take it, and the interest in life that comes from work for others not only makes us forget our ills but often actually eradicates them. But no strong person can prescribe the amount of exercise good for a weak one, and the attempt to do so often causes unavailing pain. The ideal that the old should set before themselves is

faithful work according to their strength. In this the young should encourage them. Let the old do whatever they think they can do; but do not ask them to undertake anything merely as work. Every human being longs for freedom. If children are allowed too much freedom, it may lead to mischief; but the old have earned the right to be free.

In our village, and in most other villages, I suppose, nineteen out of every twenty men cultivate a garden in the hours before and after their daily work. When they grow old, and find their regular work too heavy for them, many still tend the garden. A very little digging and a very little weeding suffice; but they know when to plant and what to plant, so that many of the best gardens in the region are those of superannuated men. They like their work, it is healthful, it gives them an interest, and the produce is a decided help in making the ends meet. More than that, in many cases, the old gentlemen take pleasure in supplying their neighbors with fine, fresh vegetables. Perhaps not one of these men could do a satisfactory day's work under an employer; but working alone and freely, they accomplish something well

worth doing, and are the happier for it. Health, fresh air, the life of nature, productive labor, and the power to make generous and beautiful and useful gifts, — all these things come from the cultivation of the garden.

The more the body fails, the more the mind must supplement it. It can hardly be wrong to mention here by name the elder Doctor William Perry of Exeter, New Hampshire, since, living to the age of ninety-eight, he was known as a public man to several generations. I think he was already past ninety when, being alone in the house one day, he had the misfortune to fall and break his ankle. What did the old doctor do? It never entered his mind to wait until help came to him. He had been too prompt and efficient all his life for that. He picked himself up as well as he could, worked his way to his surgical instruments, and set his ankle properly before any of the family reached home.

How old is Patti? Those who heard her sing in youth say she has lost some notes of her unequaled voice; but art comes to her aid and makes it still possible for her to sing. And I know a

singer who has never appeared in public who, at sixty-seven, sings with a purity and perfection few young artists can approach. Still, of course, no one past fifty can count much on accomplishing anything that depends chiefly on bodily activity. If one lives long, the body always fails. Sometimes the mind fails too, but most people keep their mental powers until very near the end of life; though the memory usually weakens a little so that one hesitates over names, in a large number of cases the higher powers of the mind go on ripening to the last. That is the reason, I say, that so much of the best work in the world is done by those past sixty. It is thought that about eighty of the hundred and thirteen plays of Sophocles were written after he was sixty; and, as the earliest of these matchless plays now known to us is believed to have been brought out when he was fifty-five, we cannot think that his earlier plays excelled the later ones. Indeed, the *Œdipus at Colonos*, his last play, written at the age of ninety, is usually ranked as his greatest work. Yet while he was writing it a son sought to place him under guardianship, on the ground

that he was sinking into the imbecility of age, a charge to which, one of his biographers suggests, color was given by the decay of his physical strength, and perhaps his very absorption in his art. His only answer was to read to the court the wonderful chorus he had just written, describing Colonos, his native place, and to ask whether that gave signs of a weakened intellect. The court burst into applause, and he was free.

Euripides did not live to the age of Sophocles; but he was still producing great plays when he died at seventy-five. Even though the critics may be right in accusing him of sacrificing something of art to emotion in his later plays, yet, if *Iphigenia in Aulis* was among his last works, as is thought, his power to appreciate and portray character had certainly lost nothing with the years.

The more I read biography, the more I am inclined to think that poetry tends to long life. Though Shakspeare died at fifty-two, most poets have lived long, and written worthily to the end. Goethe, the greatest German of the last century, Tennyson and Browning, the greatest English poets of recent times, are instances in point.

Great novelists seem often to die early, the Brontës and Miss Austen almost in youth, Thackeray and Dickens between fifty and sixty, and Scott and George Eliot at about sixty — perhaps because the wear and tear of feeling necessary to make their characters live is less sustained by a serene vision of the purely ideal. I believe Du Maurier was past sixty when he, an artist in another field, astonished the world by writing *Peter Ibbetson* and *Trilby*. No one should forget the wonderful achievement of Mrs. Trollope. Her son Anthony says of her: "She continued writing up to 1856 when she was seventy-six years old, and had at that time produced one hundred and fourteen volumes, of which the first was not written till she was fifty." These volumes were not all novels; some were travels, a much easier kind of writing. What Trollope says about his mother gives a key to her remarkable accomplishment. "Her power of dividing herself into two parts, and keeping her intellect by itself, clear from the troubles of the world, and fit for the duty it had to do, I never saw equaled. I do not think that the writing of a novel is the most dif-

ficult task a man may be called upon to do; but it is a task that may be supposed to demand a spirit fairly at ease. The work of doing it with a troubled spirit killed Sir Walter Scott. My mother went through it unscathed in strength, though she performed all the work of day-nurse and night-nurse to a sick household. . . . She was an unselfish, affectionate, and most industrious woman, with great capacity for enjoyment, and high physical gifts."

Gladstone's work as a statesman when he was more than fourscore will always be remembered.

Not long ago we were all watching the astonishing fight for life made by Pope Leo XIII at ninety-four, and we remember that most of his admirable and enlightened policy was the work of one who had passed the traditional threescore years and ten.

These great men all had strong bodies. Everybody knows how Gladstone chopped down trees to the very last. But while any strong young man can chop down trees, Gladstone himself as a young man could not have done the great work of Gladstone as an old man. And the Pope's aged body

is described as almost transparent, while his mind worked vigorously to the end.

Our own country will always remember with enthusiasm its remarkable group of octogenarian women — at their head, Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe — who at no time relinquished the idea of ceasing to work for the great ideals to which their lives have been devoted. I know in private life several women, their contemporaries, who, in office work, in carrying on the business of great institutions, in guiding and directing other people, still accomplish results out of the reach of the young. I feel that examples from private life always help us more than those of distinguished men and women, though they are less dazzling: because genius is a factor in most cases of distinction, or, at least, there is some exceptional power of mind or body which leads us to feel that such examples cannot be followed by those of smaller endowment. Character is the only thing within reach of us all, and that must go on ripening to the end.

I knew a lovely woman whose life had been a daily blessing, not only to her own friends, but to

the whole community, whose work went on to the very day of her death. She had been gradually failing for many months, and she could no longer leave her home; but the various committees of all the chief organizations in town met in her parlor because her judgment was invaluable on every subject that came up. She was the one person in the town who, in virtue of a long life lived there in useful activity, knew everybody in such a way that she could carry out any desirable scheme. A friend went to see her one morning to ask her advice about some new plan, and found that she was not able to leave her bed. The friend would have withdrawn at once, but the invalid sent word that she was able to see her, and though very weak, she listened intelligently to the plan and gave her opinion clearly. In a few hours she died. When she received her friend the end was beginning, and she knew it.

> "The action won such reverence meet,
> As hid all measure of the feat."

When she was gone the whole village realized that no one could take her place. The frailty of her body had counted for absolutely nothing, because

she was so wise. She had been useful as an active young woman, she had been useful in the work by which in earlier days she had earned her living, but, as she grew old, she became indispensable.

"My gray hair is worth while," said a charming woman who has grown gray early. "It is proper for me to do so many things I used to hesitate about." The special occasion that called out this remark was an alumnæ dinner where the guests unfortunately happened to belong to classes so widely separated that the affair threatened to be dull and formal until my gray-haired friend ventured to move gently from one to another, introducing herself, finding out the name and place of each, and putting the schoolmate in communication with some congenial spirit. My friend was not the oldest woman present, but her gray hair gave her the privilege of making the whole party happy. I know an old lady who says that in her early days she was of no use in her village because she was always too timid to express her own opinion, but that now her power to help is trebled because she has no hesitation in laying down the law to the active young people she has known from their

cradles. As she lays down the law very sweetly, her hearers usually accept it with a good grace.

A part of the very best work the old do is done unconsciously — indeed unintentionally. Their weakness and dependence make claim not to be set aside by younger people, and perhaps most of those who have ever had the care of the old could testify that this experience has been of untold value in forming their own characters. I am sure this is always so when the old person, becoming dependent, meets the changed conditions of life by making the best of them, and where the younger person has a strong sense of duty. But though some of the work done by the old can be done by them only, yet we have to admit that for most of us the active work of our lives must be done before we are old, and that while some of us retain all our powers much longer than others, yet it is rare, indeed, that any one lives very long without having to undergo the discipline of relinquishing all work for a time. Of the pangs of disappointed ambition endured as we realize that we shall never do the great things we had planned, it is perhaps not worth while to speak. Suffer as we may, — and most of

us do suffer acutely from this cause, — all who have a true ideal know that this suffering is ignoble, and would choose, if they might, the discipline that eradicates the baneful weed of ambition from their garden. If we really wish to do a noble deed, we shall work heartily till our strength fails, and then rejoice that "others shall right the wrong." If we have in us the deep springs of poetry and music, we shall be content that "others shall sing the song."

But the more one has loved to work, the more one has prized the sense of independence and the joy of being of service to others, the harder it is to submit to the discipline that comes from finding we can work no more. Independence we must learn to forego. We must be purged from the last germ of pride. The delight of helping others must be given up. We must learn to leave our dearest in the care of a higher love than ours.

V

EARNING A LIVING

It is one thing to regard the work of the old simply as useful activity: but to many old people the chief problem of life is how to earn a living, and that demands something more than useful activity. It requires that our work should have a money value recognized by those who can pay us for it. Not all are called upon to face this problem. A Sophocles who can write an *Œdipus at Colonos* at ninety, need not be troubled by it, nor even a Du Maurier who can produce a *Trilby* at sixty. The services of statesmen and doctors and lawyers are prized more and more with advancing years. Bishops and archbishops are valued in proportion as they are venerable, and Leo XIII, at ninety-four, had no occasion for anxiety as to whether he was growing too feeble for his task. A merchant in control of his own business, a farmer who carries on his own farm, a teacher at the head of a private school, need not fear to be deposed, at least, until

the power of work has really failed, and even then it will probably be possible to earn a modest livelihood till the end is near.

So long as one can take the initiative in work, though life may be a struggle, there is little danger of want. An old gentleman I knew was living very comfortably on the various small rents from a business block in his own village when, one winter night, a fire swept the block out of existence. The building was an old one, and the insurance on it was very small. Now some men of seventy-five would have thought there was nothing to be done but to live as sparingly as possible on the insurance as long as it lasted, and then, if life should unhappily be prolonged, to ask for help from the town. But the next day, this slight silver-haired old gentleman walked calmly up the street and surveyed the ruins with an intelligent eye, and in a few days more, he mentioned that, with the help of his insurance and a mortgage that a neighboring bank would take on the property, he would rebuild in the spring. The new building was a great improvement on the old, and every room in it was occupied as soon as com-

pleted. The old gentleman, however, was hampered by a mortgage that many a young man would have hesitated to assume. He therefore reserved for himself one room in the new building and opened a little grocery. He was not very strong or very active, but he succeeded in doing a small business, and it never seemed to occur to him that he could be an object for either pity or help. He pursued the even tenor of his way about ten years. Instead of being in the poorhouse then, he was an esteemed citizen of the town, and in the meantime he had paid off his mortgage. Do you think that at the end of ten years he died? By no means. But about that time, the new building in its turn was burned. Our friend this time made no more complaint than he had before; but he apparently thought his increasing infirmities made it hardly desirable for him to incur a further debt, and he left the building of the block to a younger man. However, he was not yet convinced that it was time for him to retire from active life, and he straightway set up a tiny little store on a waste lot of land and continued his business as a grocer. Hear this, ye who talk mournfully about the "dead line of fifty."

The problem of earning a living seems to press most heavily on salaried persons and wage-earners, for in most cases they have had little experience in taking the initiative, and often, indeed, they are incapable of beginning a new kind of work when they can no longer do that to which they are accustomed.

It is a little curious that old ministers are differently rated from old lawyers or old doctors. An old minister ought to be more valuable than a young one, because his experience of life must give him an insight into truth and a power to help those struggling towards the light, such as no young man can have. Yet most congregations find it easier to pay a salary to a young man who will say something bright and fresh in the pulpit, and who has the strength for an active social life.

Old teachers are seldom in demand. College professors who have special knowledge, and principals of schools armed with executive ability, may work to advantage till after seventy; but the daily fret of the nerves produced by the actual grappling with one generation of children after another — the best of children having a constitutional and

perennial objection to doing the tasks laid down for them by their pastors and masters — wears out the subordinate teachers in a comparatively short time, and few can continue their work after sixty.

We all concede that a good nurse does a patient more good than a good doctor, and the judgment and skill of a nurse count for much even when the body fails; yet while many doctors pursue their profession till they reach fourscore, it is said the average active life of a nurse is only ten years.

Stenography makes large demands on the brain; yet stenographers are often looked upon as out of the race after forty-five, because so few of them keep the bodily strength to endure the mad rush of office life after that time.

And if brain workers find themselves *hors de combat* so long before the natural period of their days, is it not still worse for the vast multitude who depend on their bodily labor alone for a support?

Fortunately, physical labor, unaccompanied by worry, seems to strengthen the body, so that it may be continued in most cases until late in life. If a man can go on working until his children can work for themselves, he may still be able to do

the lighter tasks necessary to support himself and his wife; and if his wife has, in her stronger days, kept house for the whole family, she will probably not feel overwhelmed in her age by providing for her husband and herself. To use Emerson's expression, we must "take in sail" in old age, and in many cases, this is all that is needed that we may pursue our voyage in safety. Most workers have saved a trifle by the time they are sixty, and though few have income enough to live upon, they make the income and principal together carry them through a good many years, and if they have children, these come to the rescue at the last, so that few industrious and prudent workers have to depend on charity, though unfortunately many of them suffer anxious hours when the almshouse looms before them. They do not like to handicap their children, though in point of fact, the children who are early called on to help their parents form habits of careful expenditure, which give them a great advantage all through life.

For the workers who have no children to look to in an emergency, it seems doubly necessary to secure a competency before the evil days, wherein

work is impossible, shall overtake them. Yet my own observation leads me to think that few, even among the sober and industrious, do succeed in laying aside enough to live upon in even the most frugal way. Wages are never very far beyond the immediate needs of life, rates of interest in savings banks are very low, and those with small means and without business experience cannot invest elsewhere without great risk; moreover, the most phlegmatic plodder longs for a "good time" now and then, and spends the dollar he might save if he were a mere machine. Then there are always calls to which the large-hearted cannot be deaf, from the poor, the old, and the invalids; so the years pass on, and the body breaks down, and the balance in the bank is very small. What is to be done?

I do not think the situation is often as bad as it seems to be. There is a great deal of love in the world, and people are heartily disposed to help one another. A maiden aunt with a thousand or two dollars dies, and leaves a few hundred here and a few hundred there to relatives who would otherwise be destitute. There is almost always

some generous member of every family who can help out at the extreme pinch. The number of paupers who do not deserve pauperism is astonishingly small when we think of the number of people who are poor and anxious. It is the anxiety which makes the tragedy of the situation; and though there are those so happily endowed by nature, or so firmly upheld by religious faith that they can put aside anxiety, yet, for a great number of people the last years of life will be overshadowed by it unless some plan can be devised to find remunerative employment for those who have been good workers but who are no longer capable of doing a full stint. He who can devise such a plan will be a great public benefactor. The world needs every worker. A man who can no longer do a whole day's work should not be forced to sit idle the half day he could work, and endure the humiliation of asking the town to feed him. He himself would be the better for the work, and the community would be the better for it.

Probably any amelioration of these conditions will come gradually, not through socialistic measures on a large scale, but by means of the personal

interest felt by large employers of labor in their individual workmen. Two or three years ago there was in a report of the superintendent of Boston schools, a thoughtful discussion of the problem of superannuated teachers. Of course schools exist for the scholars and not for the teachers, and it is always wrong to retain an incompetent teacher whatever her virtues or necessities may be. But the superintendent pointed out that in the case of those who have been good teachers in the past, the power to do some good work remains, even when the strength is not equal to full work, and he suggested that schedules should be so arranged as to give a little work at a small salary to retiring teachers who are still able to do it. I do not know whether such a suggestion was ever acted upon, but it seems to be a good one. Of course, in the case of a teacher growing deaf or blind, or of one whose nerves have been rasped until she no longer has the right moral influence over her pupils, such a plan would not be feasible. But there are many cases where the lightening of labor would be all the change necessary for the best results to both teacher and pupils.

It has often occurred to me that a good work might be done by superannuated teachers if anybody could be found to inaugurate it. Any teacher who has studied all her life is sure to have some favorite subject of investigation about which her knowledge is greater than that of most people. This subject she could teach to adult evening classes, either in the form of lectures or conversations. All through the small towns of our country such classes are needed, and yet few of the young people who ought to join them would be likely at the outset to feel enough interest in them to pay for the instruction, and few elderly teachers, in straitened circumstances, have the strength or the means to persevere until the classes could be put on a self-supporting basis. Moreover, all teachers of children have not the power of presenting a subject to grown people in an interesting way. Now, it seems to me, if some educational society would take up this matter, arranging courses of study in a group of neighboring towns, guaranteeing expenses and a small compensation to the teacher while making the fee to the pupils merely nominal, that in a few years such classes would

become popular and self-supporting, and be the means of introducing a much wider culture into country towns than is likely otherwise to be found there.

This is only one suggestion, made because I happen to know personally something of teachers and something of country towns. Those who are interested in other occupations and in larger places, will doubtless see for themselves what can be done in other directions. At present there is a great and unnecessary waste in the resources of the nation because old people who cannot do much have no opportunity to do what they can.

And yet, if we might have our way, we should wish that nobody who is old should be obliged to earn a living. The best work of all is spontaneous, and much work that is sorely needed in the world is done spontaneously by old people who are released from the necessity of work.

VI

ON KEEPING YOUNG

To some Nature gives a youthful body so strong and elastic that it defies years. Mrs. Gilbert, for example, over eighty years of age, was still appearing on the stage, and in *Mice and Men*, at least, she did not fear to dance. I know a gentleman who, at eighty-two, still goes to the theatre twice a week. He does not "feel old." A lady of ninety-three has just died in my own neighborhood who insisted on doing her own housework to the last, and who often walked four or five miles as recreation. But while we may give thanks for such a youthful body, it is not vouchsafed to all, though happily most of us need not count ourselves in exactly the same class as Catherine Seyton's aunt whom Scott speaks of as "an aged woman of fifty."

How are the rank and file to keep young?

Here is Emerson's prescription: "A walk in the woods is one of the secrets of dodging old age." That will not appeal to all, especially in these days

when so few seem to have learned to walk in the woods even in youth. But for those who know the charm, there is nothing like it. Fresh, fragrant air, gentle exercise, — vigorous exercise, if you choose, — a constant succession of beautiful sights and sounds, contact with living, growing plants and animals, rest and recreation for mind and body, all these may be had from a walk in the woods.

"What do you think my wife and I have been doing to-day?" said a smiling old gentleman. "We two old people, more than seventy years old, have been spending the whole day in the woods!" His face glowed with a sort of triumph. He had found the way to health and happiness. Now health and happiness have a great deal to do in keeping us young and also in keeping us beautiful.

For health, I suppose the simplest prescriptions are the best, — fresh air, wholesome food, not quite so rich or abundant as in the earlier years, useful occupations in which we are interested without being goaded either by necessity or ambition, and rest when we are tired. All moderate exercise in the open air is good. I like to see old people play croquet as they learned it in youth. All who row

in youth, row in age, though not so fast or so far. A few years ago, thousands of old people began to feel that they were about to renew their youth by means of the bicycle. You saw them at every rink, wheeling enthusiastically round and round the course. There is, in fact, no exercise so exhilarating, none that makes the years drop away so quickly. Nevertheless, the old people did not persevere in riding. They gave it up even before it went out of fashion. Probably most of them learned the art indoors, on a perfectly smooth floor, and when they began to ride in the open air the first step upward disconcerted them. Perhaps they fell, and realized that old bones are brittle. Then they really had not the strength of the youngsters. Nevertheless, I know many old people who take great satisfaction in a wheel. They learned to ride on the road, and had to encounter the good-natured laughter of their neighbors while learning. But when they had learned they knew their ground, and were under no illusions as to what they could do. Most of them content themselves with short spins of half a dozen miles. Two or three together go on these little trips, tucking a luncheon and a

book into the bicycle bag, and so they explore fresh woods and pastures new on every side, and find a constant interest in life, the wheel extending their horizon beyond that of their walks, and giving them a sense of freedom and independence wanting in either carriage drives or trolley trips. But those who try to rival the young and ride fifty miles a day, soon retire from the contest disheartened. For in pleasure as in work, the old must remember

> "It is time to be old,
> To take in sail."

But it is not in the body alone, or chiefly, that we keep young.

> "Life is but thought, and think I will
> That youth and I are housemates still."

So writes a friend who is growing old, quoting Coleridge. I think this friend will always keep her youth, though her hair is white and she has already many of the infirmities of age. Her mind is always open to new truth, and it has a freshness and vigor scarcely to be found in the young. Thinking about things worth thinking about keeps us young.

An old gentleman writing to his daughter on his seventy-fourth birthday, which occurred in mid-winter, says, "I celebrated the day by climbing the hill behind the house to see the sunrise this morning, or rather, *I ran up the hill.* Do you believe you can do as much when you are as old?" I like to think of this sweet, clean, wholesome old man who felt that the rising sun was a pageant worth the effort of climbing a hill on a cold, dark winter morning. What more splendid spectacle could have been devised to honor the day that marked his weight of years? He was not very strong, and this was his last birthday in the present life; but he was young to the end, for he had not lost the power of enthusiasm for the beauty that is within the reach of every one of us.

I remember an old lady whose busy life as the wife of a country minister had prevented her studying much after her girlhood till she was more than sixty years old. Her active mind, well-stored in youth, had not been idle through middle age, but it had been exercised chiefly on the most immediately practical matters, though she had never lost her interest in poetry, history, and public

affairs. The last twenty years of her life, however, gave her much leisure. She was an inmate of her daughter's family, and though she was far too helpful a woman to abandon useful work, yet she had many hours that must have been lonely ones if she had not kept a deep interest in reading. She was not ambitious, she had no wish to be a learned woman. She had no scruples about amusing herself, and she read a very large number of good novels in these later days, — Trollope and Mrs. Oliphant meeting her wants better than most other novelists, for she liked a long, quiet story that was sure to turn out well, with characters sufficiently like the people she knew in real life, and moreover she liked to have the characters well-bred. She thought about these characters and discussed them with a spirit unknown to novel readers who do not think. But she also did a vast amount of other reading, chiefly in the direction of history and biography, and by the time she was eighty years old it would have been hard to find another woman, old or young, who could have told you as much as she of the lives and characters of our American statesmen, from Washington and Jefferson down

to Cleveland and Roosevelt, or of the English kings and queens from William the Conqueror and Matilda of Flanders to Edward VII and Alexandra, or of the French writers of memoirs, Madame de Genlis and Madame d'Abrantès. She had the genealogy of all the royal personages of Europe at her tongue's end.

For the last half dozen years of her life, she suffered from a wasting disease that prevented her going out much to see her friends, though I can assure you she was much too vigorous in mind and heart to miss any opportunity within her reach; but she had enough interesting people to *think* about from the books she read, and as she read aloud most agreeably, she was able to share her books with her daughter and granddaughter, so that they all had plenty of people to talk about without descending to gossip. Still I do not mean that she was above taking an interest in the affairs of her neighbors.

I have heard many people, speaking quite independently of one another, say of this old lady that she "grew old gracefully." And certainly she retained a great charm, even when age and disease

had destroyed all the fresh beauty by which she had once been characterized, except that her dark blue eyes never faded. It was partly thought that kept her young, but still more love : for she was a large-hearted, ardent woman.

And this brings us to the best of all prescriptions for keeping young, — Love. Indeed, we might begin with love, and perhaps not go any farther, so much is included in it. While we are thinking of ourselves we shrivel and fade, but when we are thoroughly interested in other people, we glow with life. Love is immortal, and when we have won love, we have transcended the body. Age can no longer wither us. We need not fear anything it can do. How commonplace this sounds! It cannot be put into words because it must be lived; but every one who has once understood that love is life, every one who has learned in ever so slight a degree to push his own selfishness aside, will know that with love we enter into the eternal life, and that age no longer fetters us.

VII

OUTWARD BEAUTY

"Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place," says Socrates, at the conclusion of Phædrus, "give me beauty in the inward soul: and may the outward and inward man be at one."

The inward man is usually, I think, more beautiful in age than in youth. Indeed, one of Browning's characters says that the young are made beautiful in order that we may be able to love them before they have anything in them worth loving; but outward beauty is granted to very few old people, though there is a grand and noble expression and bearing best set off by white hairs, and old faces often have a meaning denied to the young.

"The lean and slippered pantaloon," the "big, manly voice" that turns "again toward childish treble" and "pipes and whistles in his sound," and the condition of being "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" is very far from out-

ward beauty. And with the failure of our powers comes new difficulty in making the most of what remains. When the hand trembles and the eye grows dim, neatness is no longer a matter of course. A rich old lady with a skillful maid may still be exquisite; but the rank and file of old ladies must face a different condition of things. The difficulty of looking well is very much increased for those whose means will not admit of suitable dress, and this is often the case when the power to earn is lost.

In one of Tolstoi's novels he describes in a painfully real way the repulsion felt by a young girl for her old father. The old man longed to have his daughter near him, but "the sour breath of age" was repugnant to her. In reading the story one is made to feel that old people *must* be physically repulsive, and no doubt there are many old people whose most strenuous efforts cannot save them from such a calamity. But we can all bring to mind many clean, fresh, sweet old gentlemen and ladies whose children and grandchildren love to nestle about them, and we feel that Tolstoi's merciless pen was not, after all, a truthful one. Of

course affection is constantly triumphing over physical impediments; but I am thinking now of men and women who are attractive even to strangers.

It seems to me that perfect cleanliness and sweetness are perhaps oftener attained by old men than by old women, possibly because they live more out of doors. But it is probably never reached by any old person who does not definitely strive for it.

I believe the young usually judge the old very severely as wanting in neatness. They think their grandfathers and grandmothers are careless because there are spots on their coats and dresses, stains on their hands, frayed button-holes, shoes unevenly laced. They wonder how the old people can be so untidy, and they look complacently on their own trim boots and spotless robes. It is impossible for bright eyes to realize that dim eyes do not see. The old people who are criticised have often striven to the point of nervousness to make a satisfactory toilet when the grandchildren have hardly more than jumped into their clothes. One spot on the dress of the youngsters means more carelessness than twenty spots on the dress of

their grandmother. Nevertheless, the young people look neat.

Some old people do not know their own failings. They do not see, but they do not know that they do not see. They are hurt and even angry when their young people try to set them right. They insist that they are clean and tidy when the young people are suffering agonies of mortification on their behalf. They stand before their mirrors and brush their hair, and do not guess that the parting is awry. When the time comes that we cannot see ourselves plainly in a glass, we cannot have much satisfaction in our own neatness. Even when we take such pains to make ourselves neat that we actually succeed, most of us are haunted by a question as to the result. We do not know how we look, and we cannot trust our best friends to tell us the exact truth. In fact, we hardly dare ask them for it, lest we should not be able to bear it.

And yet we wish to look our best, both for our own sake and for that of other people. We can perhaps still see how other people look and so know how we ought to look. Let us do our best.

Our best is often very unsatisfactory; but when we have really done it, we may comfort ourselves with the dictum of the disciples of the mind cure: "*I* am still neat, still beautiful, though I probably look to others slovenly and ugly." I fear none of us can say this truthfully unless we are willing to submit to a good many comments from our young people. Happy are the old people whose young people make all their criticisms in a spirit of love. Of the two great qualities on which character rests, truth and love, I fear that love is of the slower growth, and that most young people are more convinced of the need of being truthful in their criticisms than of administering them in a healing spirit. Indeed, perhaps the young people are not alone here, for do those of us who are gray-haired choose all our words with care when we see fit to admonish our youth?

No life is well rounded wherein there is not a shrine for the Beautiful as well as for the True and the Good. But a great many people who think they care for beauty have no real love for it. Many whose physical endowment, supplemented by the

vanity which keeps their dress always abreast of the fashion, makes them appear beautiful in their early years, have no ideal to guide them in age. They try desperately to hold each fleeting charm, and when, in spite of them, it escapes, they try to imitate it artificially. And the result is woeful, because they have no true ideal. I believe that any one who teaches us to see and feel real beauty in our youth is a benefactor to the world.

On the physical basis alone some women lecturers on beauty seem to have solved the question of retaining it far more successfully than Major Pendennis. They have an ideal of a really beautiful body, while the poor major's mind was in that outer darkness of recreating beauty by fashion. They believe, at any rate, that the Beautiful has its foundation in the True. For example, they would teach you how to keep your own hair healthy and abundant while Major Pendennis would buy the most expensive of wigs.

But I cannot prescribe lotions or even gymnastics. Far less would I, if I could, prescribe the medical elixir vitæ by which Professor Metchnikoff of the Pasteur Institute proposes to delay old

age. I can, however, tell you of some old ladies whose beauty is suggestive. I called not long ago on one who is past ninety, and who is said to have been a famous beauty in her youth, and I thought she could have hardly looked more beautiful at sixteen than now, though not a vestige of the look of youth remains. Her skin was wrinkled and yellow, yet it was as soft in color as old ivory, and the few loose curls that escaped from her fine black lace head-dress were snowy white, her large dark eyes were full of a tenderness rarely seen in the young, and there was an expression of sweetness about the gentle curves of the mouth that belongs only to those who have known years of love and suffering. Though her form was bent, there was a dignity in her bearing beyond the reach of any young beauty. Her dress was lovely, too, — a soft gray India silk, set off with rich old lace; it made a fitting frame for the picture.

Though you might say of her that she must have been beautiful in her youth, it is not because of the remains of that beauty that you would call her beautiful now. Her beauty now is a real thing, as distinctive, belonging as truly to her, as the

beauty of her youth. The soft blue and silver and rose in a November sunset are not like the glory of midsummer; that low-toned, unobtrusive loveliness is entirely its own. And so it is with this old lady. Her beauty in youth was given to her. She has won the beauty of age by her beauty of life.

I have spoken of the fitness of her dress. Not all who wear soft silks and rich laces know how to wear them, and not all can wear them at all. But I have seen another old lady in the simplest dress who was beautiful, too. She also had been a beauty in youth, but her life had not been passed, like that of the other, in the society of Washington and New York and Saratoga. She was a Quakeress of Nantucket who had hardly left the island from childhood to old age, and she was poor. She lived in a plain, bare room, and had to attend to her own small housekeeping. But her eyes had not lost brightness and directness of gaze, and she held her tall figure erect as old people seldom do —as perhaps they never do unless they have done their duty steadily and firmly and calmly all their lives. And her dress was as fitting as that of the

other. It was of plain brown woolen, and made as simply as it is possible to make a dress. I saw her in the morning when she was busy with her housework. Perhaps on other occasions her dress might have been relieved by the sheer white lace that the Friends rightly approve; but now she had not even a band about her neck, the binding of her brown robe coming up high enough to cover the painful wrinkles that make us all so ugly as we grow old. But she needed nothing to set off the noble face and figure, and the plain dress suggested only the "seamless robe." I will not say that all old ladies could be beautiful. I do not suppose so. But it is not dress that makes beauty, even in old age, though a tawdry dress may ruin it, and dignity and propriety of dress make it possible that beauty should be revealed. With this woman, as with my other friend, the beauty of her age was something distinct, a genuine possession that she had won from living nobly.

Since the peculiar beauty of age is so largely an achievement, it is not strange that sometimes a face that has seemed hopelessly plain in middle life becomes illuminated when surrounded by a

halo of white hair. And yet, of course, there are features so grotesquely ugly that it is hard indeed for the spirit to shine through. I think young people are often repelled by the manifest ugliness when older people, who have learned to look deeper, see it transfigured by the soul within, even when it has not burst the physical bonds. But even children are sometimes moved by it unconsciously. I remember seeing for a few moments in my childhood a great-aunt, a little wisp of an old lady, who struck me as hopelessly ugly. "Yes," said my mother, "I suppose she is so; but when I was a child, I thought she was beautiful, because she was always doing something to make me happy." Perhaps it might have been the same with me if I had had an opportunity to see my great-aunt often. At any rate, her ugliness would have been forgotten in her goodness; but I think my mother meant more than that, — that the face was actually pleasing to her.

One of the most beautiful old faces I ever knew was that of the mother of a large family who had spent her life in hard work for her children and grandchildren, and who continued to

work for them placidly and swiftly with her skillful needle till she reached fourscore. A daguerreotype of her in middle life shows an exquisite, delicate face, full of sweetness and brightness. You would be sure that the original of that daguerreotype would lead a life of unselfish, loving activity; and yet in her age there was a benignant beauty not earlier seen, a beauty that had come from fulfilling the early promise. The biologists show us that every line in our bodies is the result of the past activity of either ourselves or our ancestors, and the lines that are added to the face in a single life from youth to age, when they are lines of constant love, must give it a higher beauty than the unlined face can possibly wear, though perhaps to see it we need the "anointed eye."

VIII

DARKNESS

In youth, we all say we should not wish to live if we should have the misfortune to lose a sense, and I have often noticed in young people a certain air of having spoken virtuously in saying this, as if they stood on a higher plane than the old people they know who live on in spite of their deprivation. When the actual test comes to the old, and the loss is felt instead of being imagined, the pain at first is so great that the sufferer longs for death as a release; but he has no such proud consciousness of virtue. He certainly does not wish to live any more than he supposed he should when he was a youth; but the choice to live or die is not given him. The mental suffering reacts on the body, and sometimes the nervous exhaustion that follows incapacitates him for doing anything to alleviate his affliction. In most cases, however, the state of moral, and therefore also of mental and physical prostration is a transient one. The

courageous and unselfish recognize the truth of what perhaps has been only a trite saying to them before, that it is life that calls for courage and not death; and they summon all their powers to make the best of life both for themselves and for others. But to all sufferers, however weak, time brings some alleviation, because they learn to adapt themselves to new circumstances. The blind, for example, learn to judge so much by the ear and the touch that they are less confused and frightened in the darkness than at first. Sometimes life again becomes dear; perhaps it is always so when the sufferer is surrounded by love.

There is no time when the tenderness and thoughtfulness and forbearance of friends are so much needed as when it first becomes evident that one is suffering from a disease which, it is believed, will end in the loss of a sense. The patient is so overwhelmed by finding the unexpected calamity close upon him, and is reminded of it so constantly by the necessity of readjusting himself every moment to his environment, that he hardly has the presence of mind to call his highest powers to his assistance. He distrusts and fears his

dearest friends, to whom he is acutely aware he is becoming a burden. If those who love him, love him enough to make him feel their love, he may be saved from wreck; but it is a time of crisis.

I knew an old gentleman, the cheeriest of men, who, when he discovered that the darkness he had supposed to be temporary was to be permanent, lifted up his voice and wept aloud. In his case the blindness was the result of disease that had already paralyzed him. Before we say he was not courageous, let us think what it was for him to be bedridden, and then to learn that he was never more to see his wife's sweet face, or the changing foliage of the trees outside his windows. And yet his pain was alleviated. His wife was one of those angelic women who seem born to minister to others, and she found ways to brighten even his sombre life. His good and affectionate son thought of a thousand costly services that could contribute to his father's happiness. Some one was always at hand to read to the invalid, who had a passion for books. His person and his room were kept with the exquisite neatness that he loved and felt, though he could not see it. He had been an

enthusiastic horticulturist; and now his room was always fragrant with roses or violets or mignonette. His friends came to visit him, and if he shrank from letting them see the wreck he had become, yet he rallied all his forces and spoke his slow, broken words of greeting with the dignity of his best days. His friends loved him, and they made him feel their love.

I knew another blind old man whose life was made full and happy by the devotion of his wife. She was not rich enough to give him the luxuries she would have liked to lavish upon him, but she gave him without stint of her own life. Though she could not afford a servant, and had to receive a boarder into the house to make the ends meet, she was always ready to answer the call of her blind husband. She waited on him from morning till night with untiring patience. She read aloud to him the dullest parts of the newspapers by the hour together; and as he grew deaf, too, she sat nearer and nearer to him, and raised her sweet voice to a louder and louder tone. He never knew all she did for him. He could not see what the lookers-on could see; but he loved her dearly.

How could she do all she did? She was an old lady with white hair and a furrowed face. How was it that her strength did not fail? Perhaps the time has not yet come when the mind can wholly master the body, and there must be many loving women who would have fallen as they stood in such a battle as hers; but this I am sure of, — it was love that made the victory possible for her. Her life was a rich one in spite of its cares, richer probably than if her husband's misfortune had not called upon her for such constant effort. And her husband's life was rich. He, too, had the spirit of helpfulness. He did all he could, and it was really surprising to see what he succeeded in doing. He even cultivated a vegetable garden with success, and trimmed his own grapevines. He was of use, and the thought made him cheerful. He was able to take an active part in church work, and filled an important place in the community. The newspapers his wife read so indefatigably to him gave him material to ponder upon. There was no more conscientious voter than he, and every conscientious voter is always needed.

Not long ago I met, at a field meeting of a

Natural History Club, an old gentleman who had been all his life one of the most active members of the club, but who had now become blind and had to depend on some friend to lead him about. It was not sad to see him because of the radiance of his smile. "I don't know," he said sweetly, "but I am as happy as I was before I was blind." And he really looked so, as he sat in the shade of the trees, and breathed the fragrance of sweet fern and bayberry, and felt the breeze stirring his beautiful white hair, and chatted with the hosts of friends who enjoyed his presence. And that assurance added to the happiness of everybody else. Yet it was a startling declaration, and one would have liked to know his secret. A man eighty-eight years old and blind, a man, too, whose wife had passed on before him, and who had no children to cherish him, — how could he be so happy? "The kingdom of heaven is within you." Sometimes we suddenly realize that this is no mere form of words. I asked him what he could do to pass away the time. "I learn poetry," he said, and he further mentioned what seemed an astonishing fact, that he learned more and more quickly

as time went on. We are in the habit of thinking that only the young can learn verbatim; but he said that in his youth he had been too busy with necessary work to learn poetry, and now, with leisure, he seemed to be able to open a new and rich vein of life. His nerves were apparently unworn, and his blood still flowed easily through his brain, though perhaps more gently than of old. When I asked what he was learning just then, I was somewhat surprised at his replying, "The long scene between Iago and Cassio in *Othello*." I should not have thought of that scene as one calculated to produce his heavenly frame of mind; but he explained that his reason for choosing it was that he thought he could interest the members of the Grange to which he belonged by reciting it to them. "At our meetings," he said, "the members take turns in furnishing some entertainment, and of course I want to take my turn with the rest." As we had a leisure half hour, and it was pleasant sitting under the trees, I asked him if he would recite the scene to me, which he willingly did. He repeated it with the utmost simplicity, without the least attempt at elocution-

ary display, but in a musical voice and with great spirit and appreciation, pausing, from time to time, to remark on the various readings of certain passages and to suggest the meaning of doubtful words. When I asked how it had been possible for him to learn the scene, he said his housekeeper read the passages aloud to him as he needed them.

Other blind persons have trained themselves to other occupations. Most blind women knit and crochet beautifully and make a thousand pretty and useful things for their friends. Some succeed in learning to sew. I know a lovely woman whose eyes were so weak in her youth that she had to resort to all kinds of work to keep her active spirit from chafing; and now, in her later years, she never sees a blind person sitting idle without beginning at once to teach some of her accomplishments.

I know a resolute, unselfish woman who at the very threshold of age has lost her sight, though she has heroically endured one surgical operation after another in the hope of saving it. To be helpless seemed to her worse than death. To call on others for a hundred little personal services

seemed intolerable to her. It has been her life-long habit to help, not to receive help. Now she must ask service — from those who love her, it is true, and who are glad to give it, but who, as she well knows, have their days already filled to the brim with other necessary work. At first, the trial prostrated her, but her friends did not understand its real bitterness, — no one, it appears, however sympathetic, can understand what it means to lose a sense, except by actually losing it, — until one day her mother said with satisfaction, about some new arrangement that had been made in the family, "And now Mary will never have to be alone." At this the good-tempered, self-controlled Mary burst out tempestuously, "I shall never have to be alone! Don't you see that what is killing me is that I never *can* be alone?" Then her friends began to realize that blindness was not just what they had thought it to be. Mary has rallied. Of course such a woman would rally. She has learned a thousand new accomplishments, type-writing among the rest, and she does her work beautifully. She is now of the greatest use to those who are called upon to be useful to her.

It is a blessing to look upon the cheerful peace of her face. It is not necessary that she should toil or spin, since she does good simply by living; yet, I suppose, if she had not toiled till she had won the accomplishments which make her practically useful, that cheerful peace might never have shone upon her face.

Some blind persons seem to have extraordinary powers denied to those who see. It is said, for instance, that Sir John Fielding, the half-brother of the great novelist, an energetic magistrate in London, knew three thousand thieves by their voices alone. But, as a general thing, great special powers are not developed in those who become blind late in life.

Happily not many people are called upon to bear the inexpressibly heavy burden of actual blindness; but not one person in ten thousand lives to be old without losing a part of his power of vision. When the eyes begin to fail even a little, I suppose the stoutest-hearted of us draws a long breath, and realizes soberly that life henceforth is not going to be exactly what it has been. When, however, the failure is normal and grad-

ual, when one at fifty wears only the weakest glasses, and at eighty can still recognize a friend across the street, the change in the eyes does not seem to be felt as a serious misfortune. Glasses are an inconvenience at first, but one soon becomes accustomed to them, and forgets that he does not see as well as ever. But when the failure in vision is rapid so that one has hardly learned to use one pair of glasses before he needs a pair of higher power, or when the ability to adjust the eyes to different distances is so feeble that it is necessary to use distance glasses as well as reading glasses, then there is constant irritation from the effort to accommodate one's self to the varying distance of objects. "You object to two pairs of glasses?" remarked a physician to one who complained of this difficulty. "You may think yourself fortunate not to be obliged to use three." But even three pairs would not make vision easy. The trouble in such cases is usually in the general weakness of the system, and the oculist who proposes to supply one with a whole case of glasses makes the matter worse. Sometimes the general physician can help; but the best help

comes from rest, fresh air, exercise, and cheerful, courageous thoughts. Unfortunately the failure of the eyes is likely to occur when we are in the very thickest of the battle of life. Rest seems impossible, fresh air out of reach, and the daily drudgery leaves no time for rational exercise. Moreover, as the cares of this world are usually most pressing at the beginning of old age, when we must provide both for the generation passing off the stage and for that just coming upon it, our anxieties make cheerful thoughts difficult, especially when our eyes will not allow us to take refuge in books. I once heard a lady who had suffered far more than is the common lot in many ways say, "The greatest suffering of my life has come from my eyes. When I could use them even half an hour a day and fortify myself by reading something noble, I felt able to meet all my other troubles."

And yet life is deeper than books. The supreme help comes from within, not from without. But no one can speak dogmatically about this. And no one who has not been tried to the very uttermost can expect his testimony to be accepted by any

other sufferer. It certainly does sometimes seem as if the supreme help can only reach us through outward channels, and therefore, before we exhort others to courage and cheerfulness, suppose we see what we can do to add to their resources ourselves.

I know a lady of sixty whose eyes have failed so far that her only chance of avoiding blindness is to give up any attempt either to read or to sew. "But Ellen is eyes for me," she says, gratefully turning to her cheerful, ungrudging old friend and companion.

Even Helen Keller, who is probably more nobly independent of her senses than any other human being, tells us in her matchless autobiography that she must have remained a wild, rebellious little animal but for the devotion of her wonderful teacher, Miss Sullivan. Fortunately, the hardest heart is touched by blindness. Nobody ever laughs at the blind. While no novelist can resist the temptation to make his deaf characters ridiculous, yet he spares the blind. A friend points out that the blind old Gobbo in the *Merchant of Venice* is made ridiculous by his son, but that is the only

instance I remember in fiction. Dickens makes the blind man in *Barnaby Rudge* hideous in his wickedness, and our very blood runs cold at the thought of the blind man of Stevenson's *Treasure Island;* but neither character is to be laughed at, and though each is made more frightful by his calamity, it is not the calamity from which we shrink. It is because the pathos of blindness moves us to sympathize with all our hearts, that we are so repelled when it is accompanied by unmitigated wickedness. We cannot bear not to sympathize. The blind do receive pity, but they need more than that. They need warm, active love that is not afraid to spend and be spent in helping them not simply to bear their misfortune, but to live a full life, such a life as Miss Sullivan has made possible for Helen Keller.

And how can the blind themselves meet their misfortune? Helen Keller has shown us how. But she is young and strong and endowed with genius, some old person will say despondingly, feeling that she cannot be a guide for one who is feeble and dull. Even misfortunes that seem alike to lookers-on are not alike, because of differing tem-

peraments and circumstances. "Every affliction stands alone," says a friend. Who can dare to lay down the law for other people? But not long ago, I heard a brave lady, who, in her protracted life, has been thoroughly tested, say this of her way of bearing the loss of a sense, "Every misfortune that presses upon us always, without any moments of respite, is a blessing. It seems to call constantly, 'Up! up!' It is impossible to live at all on a low plane. We must rise into the clear air. And the strength we gain from conquering in this constant battle helps us in every other. It is as if we became invincible."

IX

SILENCE

Deafness is not, of course, confined to the old: yet it is one of the chief infirmities of age. It is more noticeable probably than most other signs of advancing years, because, even in its earliest stages, it lays a burden on other people. Though the failure of the eyes is in reality a much more grievous trial to the sufferer than the failure of the ears, it makes little difference to other people till it reaches actual blindness, and that condition is as rare as total deafness.

One can lose about half the power of hearing without being greatly incommoded, except by the fatigue, which often brings on nervous prostration; but beyond that point, the difficulties increase, not only to the sufferer himself, but to all his friends, and to even the most casual of his acquaintances. The moment it becomes impossible for one to hear ordinary conversation, that moment all one's friends begin to be conscious of one's

misfortune. It is for this reason that the loss of hearing seems to tend more to morbid conditions than the loss of any other power. Brooding over other losses may be prevented, in a measure at least, by resolutely mingling with other people; but the only possibility of forgetting one's deafness lies in avoiding other people altogether. It is not alone the strain of listening that makes social life so depressing to the deaf, though that in itself is sufficient to dull the charm of all conversation; it is the fact that every one who speaks to a deaf person is also called upon to make an effort, and that this also takes away from the natural ease of conversation. Beyond all is the consciousness of the listener that others are making an effort in his behalf. All these circumstances serve to concentrate the mind on the misfortune one wishes to ignore, and unless the subject of conversation is a peculiarly absorbing one, the game does not seem to be worth the candle.

Deafness separates a man from his friends, even from his acquaintances, and from all at once. The closer the friend, the more absolute the separation in some respects. A friend does not

mind saying, "It is a fine day," in a loud, cheerful voice, but when he has some delicate experience to confide, the voice falls involuntarily; and who, receiving a confidence, would like to ask, "Did you say that she was *dying*, or that she was *whining*"? And so the listener keeps still, and tries to guess at the right word, and guesses wrong, and makes the wrong response. How many of the finer tones of friendship are lost to the deaf? For no one will tell his inmost feelings with a shout. He cannot do it, if he would. And who can ask to have a tender whisper repeated by Stentor?

Deafness actually separates us from children. It is true the children in a family will learn to accommodate themselves to a deaf member of it, but without training a child does not know how to adapt his voice to the deaf. The deaf may talk to children, but they cannot have the refreshment of hearing their unthinking prattle. "I am deaf," said a lady to a delightful little fellow who was sending the rest of the family into peals of laughter by his quaint sayings. "Won't you try to speak loud enough for me to hear?" The child nodded, and bracing himself firmly, sent forth

a roar sufficient to waken the Seven Sleepers. "There, did you hear that?" he asked, complacently. The poor lady laughed, and made no further attempt to join in the fun.

All moralists teach us that isolation is the source both of sorrow and of sin. Willful isolation is selfishness. In Dante's lowest circle of Purgatory, the sufferers see beautiful ideals sculptured in the rocks; but it is not till they have toiled up to the next cornice that they are able to hear inspiring songs, and the interpreters tell us that the pride which shuts our ears to the voices of other souls is the deadliest because the most selfish of sins.

But the deaf are forced to isolation. The task is set them to cast off selfishness without the help that comes naturally and unconsciously from the mere every-day intercourse with others. Is it not a hard task? Well, we all have our own special tasks. Every man must bear his own burden. But then, we must bear one another's burdens too.

After all, it is hardly worth while to dwell on the suffering that inevitably accompanies deafness; it is better to see how it may be borne, and how we may all help those afflicted to bear their burden.

I have known a woman who bore her continually increasing deafness with equanimity till her hearing was about half gone; and then just at the moment when she became a physical burden to her friends because they had to make an effort to talk with her, she doubled their burden by apparently losing her temper over her misfortune. I think of no other word so suitable as "cantankerous" to describe the front she then presented to the world. I had never thought her a very courageous individual; but in youth she had had a lively and agreeable manner, and I did expect her to behave better in her old age. It must be said in excuse for her that she was suffering from nervous prostration, brought on by overwork and anxiety from which no escape seemed possible, and her eyes had failed, too, in the general catastrophe. After a time some mitigation of her outward circumstances gave her a little rallying power when her attitude decidedly changed. "I always thought I should like to try somebody else's sensorium," she said. "You and I both agree, for instance, that the rose is red, and that the Fifth Symphony is magnificent. But how do I know that your red

is like my red, or that your chords sound like my chords? And how do you suppose the world looks to a bird — or a bear? I always thought it would be fun to try all sorts of sensoria, and that perhaps that might be one of the recreations in another life. And now, behold, my own sensorium is completely changed, and I am introduced unexpectedly to all the fun. The whole world has become a vast pantomime for my special benefit. The children's Christmas extravaganza is nothing in comparison." Such "fun" as she enjoyed could hardly be permanent, though it might be agreeable for a little while; but I have observed that the more courageous among both the deaf and the blind do find a great deal of solid interest in life in seeing how much they can make out of their altered circumstances. There is a real zest in trying to do an old thing in a new way. So, paradoxically, every limitation increases our breadth of experience.

I have known a deaf woman who bore her misfortune perfectly. It fell upon her when she was a beautiful, ardent girl, full of life and activity, and she lived to be old. Her first years were years

of anguish of which she never spoke at the time; nor did she speak of them later when the anguish had changed to peace, except as she hoped to help others who were passing through the same valley of suffering. Debarred from ordinary conversation, able to hear only by the aid of a trumpet, and exhausted by the fatigue attending the attempt to hear, so that though she was endowed by nature with a strong body, she was a semi-invalid all her life, she yet gathered about her a large circle of warm friends who felt that a conversation with her was so noble and uplifting that its difficulties were not to be counted. To many, one of these conversations was the beginning of a new epoch in life. From the world at large, my friend was necessarily somewhat separated. She counted it a compensation to be excused from formal calls and other conventionalities, and a blessing that she could not hear gossip or trivial chat. And yet she was not without a benign influence on mere acquaintances. The serenity in her clear blue eyes, the graciousness and thoughtfulness in her manner were felt by every one who came in contract with her, however casually. The springs

of her inner life were pure, and that was the secret of the perfect outward expression. She was a woman of intellect. Her original studies in botany gave her a standing among scientific men; her studies in literature, economics, sociology, and philosophy so developed her judgment that she had something of value to offer to the wisest, and through her immense correspondence she influenced hundreds of lives. Now the union of intellect and character is a mystery. Had my friend's intellect been less strong, she could not have filled the same place in the world; and yet intellect is not character. Such a character as hers, even with the humblest mental endowment, must bear beautiful fruit; but it would be very different fruit from that which it was her privilege to bring to perfection. Cut off as she was from outward sources of stimulus, if her inward life had been less active, it would seem as if there must have been a certain depletion of spiritual force. As it was, she said that the compensation for her loss was a great inward peace. She said she felt that she could not have endured the stress of a richer life than she already had. To a friend,

upon whom the silence fell late in life, and who found it almost impossible to adjust herself to it, she said, "I wish you could look at your deafness as I do at mine, as a blessing." "I never shall," was the reply. "The most I can hope for is to be reconciled to it as a part of the discipline my Father sees I need." "But you never will be even reconciled to it," she answered sweetly, "unless you aim higher than that." To this woman deafness was a blessing because it had shown her the heights of life.

Helen Keller, far more heavily burdened still, seems to stand on the same heights, and to be glad of the unique work given her to do. Such women raise the standard of life for all others. Their attitude towards misfortune is certainly the right one.

Edison is reported to be glad he is deaf because he is thus saved from interruption. No doubt when a man is absorbed in a great work, such as nobody else is capable of doing, his whole heart is filled, and hearing would be a superfluous — even an annoying — sense. But not all have genius. Most battles have to be fought on a lower level.

My friend had, besides her rich intellectual endowment, two great sources of help in her life. In the first place, she did not have to earn her living, so that she never felt the pain and anxiety of having to take part, heavily handicapped, in the struggle for life. For a smaller nature, the necessity of earning a livelihood, painful as it is, is an almost indispensable stimulus to the higher life. It absolutely forbids the giving way to morbid sensitiveness so characteristic of the deaf. It forces one who would fain shrink into a hermitage into contact with other people. He cannot draw back and say, "I will not lay on other people the burden of speaking to me," not only because he would then starve, — which, in his more morbid moments, he would be quite ready to do, — but because, before he succeeded in starving, he would certainly become a much heavier burden to other people than, by reason of his deafness, he already is. But my friend's nature was so large that she did not need this stimulus, and was thereby saved some very poignant suffering. Moreover, she was singularly blest in her friends. "Ah, no," she said, "it has never in my life been necessary for me to feel

that I was a burden to my friends." I suppose that not one deaf person in ten thousand could say that. Her friends must have been a hierarchy of the noblest souls if none of them had ever shown impatience with her misfortune. Every deaf person has some friends as true as steel who lighten the affliction by their way of helping to bear it; but it is a rare case where there is not one at least among the nearest and dearest who does not feel it an unendurable bore to raise the voice or to sit in the position necessary in talking with the deaf. And when one trusted friend has shown this impatience, the germ of suspicion takes possession of the afflicted person, and he believes that he is a burden to everybody. Of course he is wrong. There are many among his friends who do not find it particularly unpleasant to sit near him and speak in a loud voice; but then he is never quite sure who these are. The friends of the deaf in general are called upon to bear a burden, and the deaf man knows it. He must try to lighten the burden; and with most deaf people the only way that occurs to them to do this is to avoid conversation altogether. It is a rare thing for a deaf person to betake himself

to a trumpet — always conspicuous and inconvenient — till he is urged to do so by some one else. To most deaf people, a trumpet seems to seal their fate. "Leave all hope ye who enter here." The deaf try to believe that they are only a little hard of hearing, and that perhaps a change in the weather, or an improvement in their general health may give them back a part, at least, of their birthright; and then some friend, who is thought to have tact, gently insinuates that they would be happier with a trumpet! I have seen a sweet old lady, whose hearing was only very slightly impaired, flush painfully when her daughter, whose soft voice made it particularly hard for her to make herself understood, simply asked her if she did not want to try the trumpet of a deaf caller. The old lady well knew how much less her infirmity was than that of the caller, but she saw that her daughter was classifying them together, and she knew that the daughter was tired of raising her voice.

Many of my deaf friends use trumpets; but I have known only one who purchased a trumpet of her own accord, and she did not adopt the instrument till after so many years of increasing deaf-

ness that the burden of it seemed less to her than the fatigue of doing without it. The help a trumpet gives, certainly at first, is hardly more than a reminder of one's loss. I have been told of a mother who had never heard her children's voices except through a trumpet. She held her trumpet to hear her baby coo. But how much like a baby's cooing was that exaggerated blare? When anybody says to me, "Mrs. Blank is rejoicing in her new ear-trumpet," I know very well that when I next call on the Blanks, Mr. Blank and Miss Blank will tell me how delightful Mrs. Blank's new trumpet is, and that Mrs. Blank will sit silently by with a heightened color. She will not dispel the illusion of her husband and daughter, because she knows she *ought* to lighten the burden of her deafness to them as much as she can. And in time she gets accustomed to her new possession, and really finds it useful, indeed necessary. It is certain that trumpets must be used by the deaf when their infirmity reaches an advanced stage, — for not one person in a thousand is willing to take the trouble to write on the tablets of anybody who can be made to understand in any other way, — but I

should not like to be the first to propose a trumpet to a friend I loved. Aurists delay suggesting one till long after the acquaintances of the deaf have urged its use. "Do you think," said a lady sadly to her aurist, "that I ought to get a trumpet?" "Not for a long time to come," was the reply. "It will hurt you instead of helping you." "But," she said timidly, "ought I not to use it to save my friends?" "Not yet," he said. "Your friends must help you to bear your misfortune." Your friends *must* help you! There is the sting. This is, I believe, the source of the peculiar sensitiveness of the deaf, always so puzzling to those of us who can hear.

I have seen a lovely woman so thoughtful of her deaf old uncle that she sat always close by his side and directed her conversation with everybody in the room entirely to his ear. In that way, she almost brought him into the family circle. Yet the time came when her voice failed. All her love and sympathy could not make it possible for her to talk to him. Then, with affectionate care, she selected the best trumpet she could find, and made him a present of it. This was the first hint

the poor old gentleman had had of the sacrifice she was making for him, and he returned the gift without a word. "He will not even *try* to help us," said his disappointed niece. Was he selfish? He was probably so absorbed in the difficulty of hearing even when his niece did her best, that he was totally oblivious to the effort she was making. If he could have understood it, he must have become acutely sensitive. He certainly felt that it would be easier to withdraw into himself than to be burdened with a trumpet, and he must have known that no trumpet would altogether relieve her strain. He probably felt that the best thing for everybody would be for him to relinquish all conversation. That would lift the burden from others altogether. Yet we are to bear our burdens, not to shirk them, and we are to bear one another's burdens. No doubt the spiritual life of the whole family is richer when the sufferer allows his friends to bear the part of the burden they are really able to sustain, and helps them to the very utmost of his own power, with instruments, if it must be.

The young can learn lip-reading, and lift their

burden almost entirely from the shoulders of others; but after the eyes begin to fail, this is too great a nervous strain for most constitutions, and the old can hardly hope to conquer the difficult art.

The method of adaptation to any misfortune must vary with the character of each individual. Edison is thankful for an excuse to escape ordinary conversation; but I knew a beautiful old lady whose keenest suffering in her deafness came from not being able to join in the ordinary discourse of her family and friends. She was a bright, sociable, sweet-natured woman, interested in all the people about her. Then came the silence, and it seemed to her that her whole life stood still. The Eddas tell us that "the deaf can still fight and be useful." She could not fight, and she could no longer be useful in her old way. She was certainly very useful still, for she was an excellent housekeeper and seamstress, and she could cook delicious food. Many a poor overworked mother found her burden suddenly lifted when her deaf neighbor came in for a moment and insisted on carrying away an armful of sewing to finish, and

many an invalid found an appetite when some of the dainty dishes my friend had made were brought to the bedside. But in the past it had been her habit to chat pleasantly with the neighbors she helped, and she had modestly fancied that they valued her words as much as her deeds. It is true she was not now dumb; but to chat is not to lecture, and a woman like this one cannot say much unless she has a response.

She had loved to give little tea-parties, and these parties had been looked upon as unusually delightful, because she had such a charming way of bringing all her guests into touch with one another, by a word here, and a smile there, by capping the anecdote of one, and suggesting that another should tell her own pet story *apropos* of some remark just made. Now a change came over these little tea-parties. The china and rolls were as before, the visitors did their best and she did her best, but the charm had vanished. So the parties ceased.

She had always loved to go to church, and it grieved her family that she should give up going; they urged her to go even if she could not hear

all she had once heard, and she yielded to them. "How glad I am you made the effort!" said her sister, radiant, on their return. "Are you?" said my sweet old friend. "I was conscious of only one sound during the whole service. I knew when the organ was played by the trembling of the floor." So, after that, she stayed at home and read her Bible and her hymn-book alone.

She had always been active in the Ladies' Sewing Society, and she had entertained a houseful of guests at any time of a religious conference. She did not relax her efforts now. She was working unselfishly for others, not for herself. But the spirit of the meetings was no longer what it had been when she could interchange thoughts with her visitors. Meat and raiment she could still give: but the life is more than meat.

I am speaking not only from her point of view but from that of her guests. Most of them did not get the uplift from the visit they had once counted upon. They had not altogether understood before how much had been due to her. She was not a great talker, and she never put herself forward, but she thought sensibly and unselfishly on

many subjects, and the few words she contributed almost unnoticed to a conversation often gave it a higher tone. She herself thought only of her own loss in not hearing the wise words of her favorite ministers; but they discovered that the loss was not entirely hers. A few, however, had the insight to see that something was given for what had been taken away. The patient sweetness of the gentle old face was not lost on all her friends. Some of them felt that her life still helped them even more than her good words had once done. But you see her problem was very different from Edison's. I do not know whether she altogether won her battle, for she withdrew more and more into herself, till at last she seldom saw any one outside her own family. Each has his own burden. The burdens look alike, but they are entirely different.

In this case the family of my friend gathered about her with the tenderest love, and helped her efficiently to lift her burden. I wish I could paint the picture of the fair, quiet daughter-in-law, as she ministered to her husband's mother. How loud and clear her soft, kind voice became! How easy

it always seemed for her to be close at the mother's side when a word of explanation was needed! How careful she was to look directly towards the mother and speak directly to her, to see that the mother was placed where she had the right light to help her in interpreting the lips of others! How affectionately the children were taught the same thoughtfulness for their grandmother! How they were all encouraged to show their love for her by caresses when their words were not understood! And this good daughter-in-law trained the servants patiently till they also managed to lighten the sufferer's burden. The generous and manly son of the old lady, with his deep, sonorous voice, could often carry on a long conversation with her, and he never grudged the effort. Her sister, though old and feeble, would exert her whole strength to repeat a joke in tones that could reach the dull ear, and would declare that it was no effort at all, indeed, that she liked to take the trouble because her own fun was doubled when her deaf sister joined in it. A niece, a lively young girl living in the family, took pains to see that every scrap of interesting news was straightway

conveyed to her aunt. In short, the whole family rallied about her, and at home there was still social life for the afflicted woman. I do not think one of that family circle ever dreamed of being heroic, and none of them is known to fame; but the beauty of their unconscious, simple daily life brings tears to my eyes.

It seems almost worth while to be deaf to receive the devotion sometimes lavished on the sufferer. "I have never once felt my deafness since I was married," a lady said, "because my husband has been determined that it should not shut me out from anything."

I should like to show you the way my friends, Winifred and Lucretia, make deafness pleasant. Winifred and Lucretia are hard-working women who live in a little apartment by themselves. In the same house is a deaf old lady who has some tastes in common with them. So, when they come home, after their long day's work, they coax her into their sitting-room. They make her lie down on their comfortable lounge, because they know by sympathetic observation something about the fatigue of deafness, and then they bring their

easy-chairs one on each side of the lounge, so that they, too, look comfortable, and then they begin to chat about things really worth while. They speak loudly and slowly, and the moment they see a puzzled look on the old lady's face they begin over again. And she can join in their conversation, though too deaf to undertake it with anybody else. And her face begins to glow and her eyes to shine, and she begins to chat herself in a natural way, though she has not done so before for years. She likes to talk with them about books, and people, and pictures, and even about music, which was once a passion with her, though she cannot now hear it. And she does not seem dull to them, though to everybody else she is a stupid old woman who has half lost her mind. This old lady was once a chatterbox. But a deaf chatterbox is usually a pitiable object. Even Mrs. Nickleby or the immortal Flora would have stopped talking after a while, without the stimulus of an occasional response. The most incorrigible chatterbox does not chatter in a room alone. Now this old lady says that she believes deafness is a needed corrective for one so talkative as she was, and that

she accepts it as the discipline she most requires. "But then," she adds shyly to Winifred and Lucretia, "you can't think how delightful it is to have an occasional chat, for all that."

I had occasion not long ago to watch a deaf old lady at dinner surrounded by a dozen young girls. The girls were sympathetic and well-bred, and they would all have been glad to relieve the embarrassment of the old lady, who, being forced to lay down her trumpet, could not join in the conversation. But one of the girls showed special skill in her treatment of the situation. She sat next the deaf lady, and in some mysterious way, apparently without any effort, she managed by a few words, spoken, from time to time in a pleasant, distinct, though not very loud voice, to keep her neighbor informed of most of the topics of conversation, and to make her feel that she was really one of the company. It is impossible to say how she did this. It seemed to be a work of unconscious genius. But I afterwards learned that this sweet sympathetic girl was the daughter of deaf parents; and then I understood that her genius verified the famous definition of genius,

as the infinite capacity for taking pains. Young as she was, she had had the practice of a lifetime in making herself understood by the dull ears of those she loved, and I shall never forget the loveliness of her expression as she talked.

Those who live with the deaf need special grace. Deafness is irritating to both the deaf person and his friends. We have been told how the gentle Laura Bridgman actually struck her mother, who could not endure the incessant strain of talking with her, though the poor girl afterwards lamented her loss of temper in sackcloth and ashes. To a very large number of persons deafness is always either irritating or ridiculous, or both. Story-writers find it a rich field for wit. Even the most tender-hearted novelist often makes a deaf character absurd when he would be shocked at the thought of so treating one represented as blind or lame. Happy, then, are the deaf who have such a sense of humor as to be able to laugh at their own expense. There are some such mellow, wholesome natures, but their number is not very large. Most deaf people are anxious and suspicious, knowing that they do not pass for what they are worth, and

that their misfortune itself is of a kind to irritate their friends. I remember an old story in the *Atlantic Monthly* of an attempt of some old men, college classmates, to form a social club to talk over old times. They hesitated about inviting one member of the class. "He is so *very* deaf, you know, so *unnecessarily* deaf." They did not wish to shut him out, but they felt him to be a burden, and they were so irritated by being compelled to bear a part of his burden that they wished to think he was in some way to blame.

> "The dog, to gain his private ends,
> *Went* mad, and bit the man."

You see, it is not without reason that the deaf sometimes feel that they are separated from their fellow creatures more completely than they could have believed it possible to be separated by anything but death. And yet they are wrong to allow such feelings to linger in their hearts, and they will not have met their misfortune aright till they feel, with my noble friend, that all such losses are blessings. Indeed, what spur, what lash of necessity is not a blessing?

"They are calling to thee from the pinnacles of the throne
of God;
I know not what hath befallen thee in this dust-heap (the
world),"
says Hafiz.

X

WEAKNESS AND DEPENDENCE

When Troy fell, the aged queen, Hecuba, in bewailing her fate as captive to the Greeks, and enumerating all the horrors of her situation, particularizes among them, according to Euripides, that of her "wrinkled back," which made it hard to give up the soft couch of a palace for the bed of a slave. Many old people escape blindness and deafness, but scarcely one escapes rheumatism. Beyond the pain it causes and the stiffness which makes all work unsatisfactory, it often lays one completely aside with lameness, and when lameness shuts us up in our own homes, we have more need than ever to begin each day with the motto "Courage and cheerfulness." If we are not actively determined to be brave and cheerful, our lives will be narrowed to our environment. I have just seen a man who for nine years has lain in bed, a prisoner to one room — and he spoke in a cheerful, hearty voice. Think what it means to resist depres-

sion for nine such years! And, if you feel that the task is not worth the trouble to yourself, think what a world-wide difference it makes to other people!

Even when we grow old almost unconsciously and have no specific disability, there comes a time of weakness which is sometimes equally hard to bear. It denies us almost all pleasures, the refined and elevating as well as the mere careless physical delights of youth, and we begin to understand the adage that to the young the absence of pleasure is pain, and to the old the absence of pain is pleasure. No one has touched this theme with more insight than Mrs. Julia C. R. Dorr, in her fine poem, *The Comrades* (The Soul to the Body), beginning, —

> "Comrade, art thou weary?
> Hath the way been long?
> Dost thou faint and falter —
> Thou who wert so strong?"

The soul humbly owns that "half the joy of living" had come from the body.

> "Think what thou hast brought me!
> All that eye hath seen.
> Glow of dawn and sunset,
> Starlight's silver sheen.

All the pomp and splendor
Of the summer day;
Gleam of sparkling waters
Leaping in their play."

And to the enumeration of the wonders of vision is added the "fragrance of the rose," "the song of thrush and veery," and "love's most dear caresses." The poem ends courageously, —

"Let my strength uphold thee
As thine own strength fails,
As the way grows steeper
And the night prevails.
Cheer thee, cheer thee, Comrade!
Drink thou of my wine —
Lo! the cup I bring thee
Holds a draught divine!"

This is the true spirit with which to meet the decay of the body. But I know that some old people will say that while they could bear their weakness sweetly if it were only weakness, they have not the courage to meet it when it involves something far more unbearable — dependence. If the motto of a lifetime has been "Non ministrari sed ministrare," it is hard indeed to be called upon to reverse

it. And yet we can no longer minister, and we must consent to be ministered unto. And sometimes there is nobody to minister to us. This is a point on which I would not dwell; and yet I cannot omit it, for I see so many old people who are left almost without necessary care, and this is sometimes the case with those who have least deserved it. Only those who have the strongest hold on a younger generation can hope to be cared for in age with the enthusiasm with which they themselves have cared for the young in the past. The childless cannot expect it. Even those who have children will find that the best of children may recognize duties more imperative than the care of their parents; and though this cannot often be true, yet there are many men and women, estimable in other ways, who are callous to the needs of the old. They would be shocked to suspect themselves of grudging food and shelter to old people, but they are too deeply immersed in their own affairs to give them the sympathy they need.

Of course love begets love, and most of those who have led an active life of loving service will find some one ready to serve them lovingly in the

end; but there are strange turns of fortune that may cut one off from friends.

Here is a case in point. I know an old lady who was for fifty years the housekeeper and valued friend of one family. When, in middle age, she sometimes expressed anxiety about the future, the four young sons of the family laughed at her fears. As if they could not take care of her who had taken such care of them! And yet she outlived all the sons. They had been poor men, though men of weight in the community, and the provision the last one was able to make for the old housekeeper was very small. At seventy-five she could not live in a house without a furnace, and prepare her own meals. So she chose to exchange her pension for a place in an Old Ladies' Home. Perhaps to many, a life of independence, though full of physical discomforts, would have seemed more bearable than the life in a Home; and yet perhaps she was right. In the Home, her body was well cared for, and she was too kind and cheerful a woman not to make friends with the old ladies about her. Her life is probably broader than it would have been if she had insisted on her in-

dependence. She had been more than independent all her life, for she had been of use to others. Why, then, should she rebel against the Providence that made her dependent at last? Pride is not a virtue. If she could still have worked, self-respect would have led her to do so. But though she was self-respecting, she was not proud. Alas, to most of us, pride is one of our dearest possessions. And it is so inextricably tangled with self-respect that though we may know in our own hearts which is guiding us, no one looking on can decide, so that we must judge others very gently. Dependence in old age is not a light thing, and we must do our very best to guard against it. But over-anxiety about it not only does no good, but it makes our lives mean. We wrong the world when we allow ourselves to be crushed by the burden of anxiety, for we do not give to others the cheer and blessing that they have a right to receive from us. Of course there are careless creatures who never think of the future at all, and who feel no responsibility about providing for it, so that they add to the burden of the world by their very light heartedness. The golden mean

between over-anxiety and carelessness is hard to find, and it never is reached except by those who faithfully do their very best to provide for themselves and yet recognize humbly and serenely that it may be part of God's purpose for their lives that they should fail, and that if they so fail, dependence will be a blessing for which they must be thankful.

This is so hard a doctrine to live up to that civilized countries, the world over, are beginning to discuss the practicability of old age pensions. New Zealand leads the van here as in many social experiments. "On October 20, 1898, the New Zealand House of Representatives voted to grant a pension of £18 per annum to persons sixty-five years of age and upward, of good moral character, who have resided in the colony twenty-five years, and whose income does not exceed £34." [1] It is hard to see how any harm could come from such a measure, especially in New Zealand where the taxes are so graduated that the rich pay a larger proportion than the poor: for the ordinary taxes

[1] *Political Growth in the Nineteenth Century*, by E. H. Sears, p. 364.

for the support of poorhouses are largely saved, and the poor who thus have a modest competence spend their money for the necessaries of life, thus encouraging the best use of capital in production, whereas, if the taxes bore less heavily on the rich, their surplus would be spent in luxuries. Still, there is a time-honored belief that it is not right to rob Peter to pay Paul, even if Peter is rich and Paul is poor, and it will probably be a long time before America is persuaded to follow the plan of New Zealand. This generation at least will have ample opportunity to rise to the height of character demanded by the present uncertainty of support in old age.

Nevertheless, Doctor Edward Everett Hale argued before a Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature in favor of a limited old age pension bill, granting to citizens of the state over sixty-five years old who have paid a poll tax for twenty-five years, and have not been convicted of any crime punishable by imprisonment, a pension of two dollars a week, proposing that a part of this poll tax should be set aside for just this purpose, and suggesting that the saving to poorhouses would offset

the expenditure. He said that a similar system has already been adopted in Belgium, Austria, Denmark, France, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and Australia. So we may be nearer the solution of this problem at home than we have supposed.

But it is not only in the matter of money that the old are dependent. A millionaire is as likely to need personal service and consideration from his friends as a pauper. He is perhaps more likely to be weak and helpless as his day declines.

Weakness is in itself hard to bear, and the greater the vigor of the mind, the more painful often is the realization of the weak body that forces one to give up all the accustomed activities: though happily some old people say that their desire for active pleasures has vanished with the power to pursue them, and that there is a beauty and peace in the quiet life of age which must not be underestimated. But the weakness that involves dependence on others presents another phase of discipline. The rich can buy good service sometimes, though not always, for it takes a fine char-

acter to be a really good servant whatever the technical skill may be; but no service that is bought can fill the heart or relieve the longing for loving companionship. When the service must be rendered by friends, the old feel their helplessness still more poignantly. It must be owned that not all of the younger generation — even among the kind-hearted and dutiful — are ready to give up so much of their own interesting lives as is necessary for those who are to care efficiently for the old. They do not mean to be neglectful: but they have not been old themselves, and they do not realize just how weak their patient is, and how little he can do for his own comfort. And, furthermore, very close confinement to the care of the old is so deadening that one becomes the dullest of companions, and it is necessary to break away sometimes even from no other motive than the happiness of the old themselves.

Old people must remember this, and, to do them justice, most of them do remember it: for though the young have not been old, the old have been young, and if they have ever cared for others unselfishly, they cannot forget the lessons they have

learned. Many old people remember these lessons almost too acutely. They would not deny that the discipline of caring for the weak has been good for them, and they are glad to have had it; but no one likes to realize that he is a means of discipline to others, no matter how good for the others he may know that discipline to be. He wishes service to be rendered for love and not for duty. No service is ever perfect to the one served till it is a pleasure to the one serving. But, in the very nature of things, such service is not always possible, even when it is wrought in love, and the old, who have been called upon in the past to make sacrifices themselves, often sadly realize that sacrifices must be made for them.

I have known one strong, cheerful woman in middle life who has a passion for the care of the weak and helpless, such an active delight in ministering to them that no thought of sacrifice finds room in her heart. The good she does is incalculable. The feeble, the old, the sick, the tired, lean on her in perfect repose, forgetting that they are a burden because they cannot help realizing that the bearing of such burdens is the very fountain

of life to her. She is one of the rare souls of Wordsworth, to whom

> "Love is an unerring light,
> And joy its own interpreter."

No one can see her without longing — and even trying in some small measure — to be like her, but most of us cannot do the things she does naturally without calling to our aid Duty, that "stern daughter of the voice of God," and therefore our service is never so acceptable as hers.

Sometimes the old brood sensitively over the ingratitude of those for whom they have toiled in the past. Now it is true that almost all of us forget what others have done for us in the past, and when the time comes for us to take our turn in doing, we often respond rather reluctantly, instead of rejoicing in the opportunity. And though most people remember the care their parents have given them vividly enough to wish to make a return for it, they do not appreciate quite so fully what their grandparents and more distant relatives and friends may have done, still less what the old

people did in their prime for the next generation, without whom the third generation would have been helpless. Gratitude thus becomes very much diluted. We all have to guard ourselves against a grudging response to the claims of gratitude. But when we are old ourselves, let us remember that what we have done in the past is done, and that it is not for us to remember it. If we have done anything in a true spirit, we must have done it without any thought of a return; and though ingratitude is no light fault for the ungrateful themselves, it does no harm to any of us to have our best deeds forgotten. Such forgetfulness simply calls upon us the more loudly for new and better deeds, even though they must be very different deeds from those we once could do.

> "He only earns his freedom and existence
> Who daily conquers them anew."

There is a strenuous life required even of the feeblest.

But what can the feeble do? Sometimes they feel sadly that the only task for them is the nega-

tive one of doing as little harm as possible. Yet I lately heard a woman, overburdened almost to the point of breaking, say of her feeble mother, "As long as I can have her to look at and to speak to, she gives me all the help I need." And I heard another woman say of an invalid relative whose care had fallen on her, "Nobody could live in the house with my aunt and not be the better for it." Let me tell you, then, how some old people have borne their weakness.

I knew one lovely old lady who had been the active centre of a large family. She was a little creature with an indomitable spirit. She had trained her children well, and they had gone from her to fill positions of usefulness. She was left alone with one unmarried son and her housekeeper. And then her power failed. The doctors said her heart was weak, and she knew the beginning of the end had come. She did not speak of this to any one. She quietly went on with her daily life, living as nearly as she could as she had been in the habit of doing, but giving up without a murmur — without even suggesting that she was giving up anything — things that

were beyond her strength. She appeared in the breakfast room every morning at the usual hour, and though her face was pale, she spoke in her usual cheerful tone, so that her son hardly realized that anything was changed. When she could, she still sewed a little, for she had been a notable seamstress. When she was able to walk a few rods, she went to church or she called upon her friends, as though her disabilities were only temporary and she still had social duties to fulfill. She welcomed the friends who came to see her with her usual interest though perhaps not with her old energy. She never spoke of being an invalid; perhaps she did not even think of it, for her mind was occupied with larger affairs, plans for the good of the village, the well-being of her numerous children and grandchildren, and the news of the world. For she still read the newspapers daily as well as her Bible. She read books, too, sometimes, though their weight was almost too great for her frail strength. She faded slowly for a year or two, and by and by a daughter came to care for her. Still she rose punctually at the usual time, though she could not dress her-

self without help, and she had to sit down while her daughter brushed her hair. "Why will you get up?" asked the daughter gently. "There is no need of it." "No," she answered, with equal gentleness, "but it is n't necessary for me to lie down. I shall be ready for that when it is time." And so a week passed by. Then one day she said she would lie in bed. And towards evening she called her son to her and gave him her Bible. And then she closed her eyes and slept and woke no more. I do not think her weakness was in vain to any one who watched her.

In this case the weakness of the invalid did not place a great strain on anybody else; but I remember another old lady who had to drink of a far bitterer cup. She had been all her life an actively useful person, enthusiastically giving service without stint to all about her, and then, in her old age, she was attacked by a lingering and hopeless disease involving excruciating pain. And she had no money. She was dependent on a relative whose health was wrecked, whose power to earn was fast failing, and who had other pressing calls. Her warm sympathy made her alive to all

this, and there were times when her beautiful courage and cheerfulness almost failed her. But she always rallied at once. She saw plainly that hard as things were, they would be easier for everybody if she could be cheerful, and she was cheerful. She had the happiness of knowing that though she must be in some sense a burden, it was a burden borne with love. She knew that if the end for the family should be the almshouse, as it sometimes seemed as if it must be, love would not fail even there. She indulged in no morbid complaints about her lot, but set herself resolutely to make her corner of the world as bright as possible. Her energy in caring for herself without calling on others was really wonderful. She could not always help herself, but in the many years of suffering and weakness through which she was called to pass, I suppose that she never once asked anybody to do for her what she was able to do for herself, and she did many things that nobody else would have thought her able to do. Furthermore she entered with all her heart into every enjoyment still left to her. She could not go to see her friends; but when they came to

her, she received them with such animation and showed such a warm-hearted interest in all their weal and woe that they always went away happier, and usually with the impression that their hostess was not really very ill. She was interested in the affairs of the whole world, and instead of tiring her already weary relative with lamentations over her own helplessness, she would turn the current of thought by a lively discussion of the affairs of Holland, for instance, or China, so that her conversation was a refreshment, a true recreation. In the midst of her life of pain, letters came to her from another old lady, a far-away cousin whom she had not seen for years, letters so full of peace and serenity and cheer that the day of their coming was a festival to the household. Sometimes she had strength to reply. There was an action and reaction of brave spirits in the correspondence of these two feeble old ladies that made sunshine in two widely separated homes. If our old lady read a good conundrum in a newspaper, she cut it out to amuse somebody else. If a little package came to her wrapped in fine paper, or tied with a bright cord, she saved the paper or the cord for

the paper dolls of some little girl. As long as she could knit stockings, she did so. When the weight of a stocking would bring on cruel pain, she knit holders, — bright-colored ones. In the home where she lived, pain and weakness and weariness were inevitable, not only for herself but for others, — and anxiety *seemed* inevitable, though perhaps it never is really so to those who accept perfectly the will of the Heavenly Father, — but the home was a happy one, a cheerful one. So much she must have seen and known herself. But she probably could not know that the discipline laid upon her relative through her own disabilities was that most needed. For this relative had a timid, anxious nature, and needed to learn how to walk erect under a load of anxiety. It was necessary, then, that the load should be one that clearly could not be cast off. A timid nature shirks responsibility except when love is so strong as to cast out fear. In this case the need of bearing the burden was unmistakable, so the question was not how to shirk it, but how to bear it nobly. The body was pressed down by the load, but the heart expanded with the love by which alone it could be sustained. It

was in no figurative sense that the burden was a blessing. This old lady had done good to others all her life; but the best thing she had ever done for any one was done at last unconsciously by the very weakness and dependence which seemed to take from her all power of doing anything. And though her work was unconsciously done, I do not think she could have done it at all if she had been less determined to make the very best of the circumstances. If she had been a willing or a fretful dependent, she could not have inspired the love that gave the strength needed to look up and not down.

For the vast, unconscious power of single-minded consecration to the highest in one whose body is helpless to accomplish undreamed-of good, there is no better exposition than the well-known story of *Miss Toosey's Mission*, and this I recommend to any old person who is weak, dependent and discouraged.

Sometimes we wonder at the mystery of helplessness. Why must we pass through such a dis-

cipline? Even when we give most help to others, we may be as unconscious of it as Miss Toosey was. And do we need the discipline for ourselves? How can it make us better? All difficulties overcome make us better; but sometimes we grow weaker and weaker, and perhaps, like Miss Toosey, we are at last too weak even to pray. Is there any meaning in such weakness as that? Is not this the meaning—"We had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead"?

XI

THE INNER LIFE OF THE OLD

So long as the body is without a flaw, so long as every sense is perfect, we have not the key to the inner life of the old. Love indeed may persuade an aged friend to open his heart to us; but though love is the best half of sympathy, it is not all of it, and the old know that so well that they seldom try to express their inner life even to the warmest-hearted of their younger friends.

Now let us lose a sense or a power, even temporarily, and straightway we find in our hands the key we need. We may use it or not. That will be according to the largeness of our heart; but henceforward we have the intelligence which must supplement love in all effectual sympathy.

One who has partially lost her hearing contributes the following data to help those who would gladly understand the old if they could. She says she has an aged relative who is deaf enough to be shut out from ordinary conversation except when

the conditions are all favorable, and that many people speak of this relative as having lost his mind. Her own deafness seems to be bounded by the same conditions, — an atmosphere whose density will cause the barometer to stand at thirty inches, a well-lighted room (though she is not conscious of watching the speaker's lips) and freedom from distracting noises outside, while much depends on the state of the nerves and on the position of the speaker whose voice must be sent out directly towards her. As she is still vigorous and alert, as all her other senses are unimpaired, and as her affliction is so recent that she is still in touch with all around her and familiar with their subjects of conversation, and as she is aware of the conditions she needs in order to understand others, and therefore often able to command them, her disability is not painfully conspicuous, and no one dreams of ignoring her presence in any circle where chat is going on. Not so in the case of the old man. All his senses are depleted, and he cannot draw on one of them to supply the deficit of another. Even if he has discovered the conditions necessary to his hearing, he has hardly

vigor enough now to command any of them. Moreover, he has so long been shut out from intercourse with others that he must hear a whole sentence in order to understand it, while with his younger relative, a word may be enough. So he sits apart, silent, and apparently stupid. But my friend says that all this is no evidence that he has lost his mind in any degree. Having no senses is a very different thing from having no sense, as we all acknowledge in the wonderful case of Helen Keller. Some one may ask if it is not unfortunate to cite Helen Keller here, since she appears to be really brilliant, in spite of her deprivations, while the old man seems to be stupid. But it must be remembered that unwearied pains is being taken to connect Helen Keller with the outside world, and the unusual scientific interest in her case has given her extraordinary opportunities; even without these it is a law of nature that parents and teachers eagerly work to develop the young. Moreover, her youth itself gives her the bodily vigor which is especially necessary to supplement defective senses.

The children of the old, however they may

love their parents, are, for obvious reasons, unlikely to take the interest in their development that parents take in that of children, nor do they even feel any responsibility about it; and yet an old person deprived of a sense is put into a new environment which may demand a new education as definitely as if he were a child. He is "moving about in worlds not realized." I used to suppose old people were not self-conscious enough to know their own failings. Most young people think so. I have a suspicion now that they are keeping a great deal to themselves. There is no doubt that age does sometimes dull the mind; but self-consciousness is usually retained long after the senses become dulled, and while it is retained, I am convinced the old use great self-control, more, indeed, than is possible to the young. My friend thinks that as our love expands, we shall find a way to help the old to fuller expression. We shall not try to educate them in any domineering or patronizing way; but we may really educate in the etymological sense of drawing out what is within them. My friend is sure that when the time comes, we shall find that the unexplored mine of the

inner life of the old is rich beyond all our dreams, that its treasures compared with those of the mind of youth are as diamonds to charcoal. The weight and stress of years and the heat generated in the conflict of life have crystallized the dull carbon into a gem.

Of the existence of such a mine of wealth I have no doubt, but probably even love will fail to draw out all its treasures in this world, because the old have no vigor. They have lost the instrument of expression. They can still express moral beauty, because that is shown by patience, gentleness, and fortitude, as clearly as by active love; but their intellectual jewels lie too deeply imbedded in the rubbish of the decaying senses to be easily brought to light by even the most wholehearted delver. An occasional fragment will richly reward the worker, but for the full beauty of the substratum we must wait till the senses are entirely cleared away.

XII

THE RELATIONS OF THE OLD AND YOUNG

Long ago I saw at an Art Exhibition a picture of an old lady, leaning on the arm of a young girl who was leading her gently through a garden to a little chapel. Both faces were as serene as the beautiful sunset light that touched them. The picture stirred me so much that, longing to look like the young girl, I enthusiastically offered my own arm to an elderly relative. But my relative had no wish to appear in the rôle of the old lady. She rejected my arm with a look that would have withered me, if it had not made me laugh. Thereupon I discovered that I had been posing, and that nothing had been farther from my thoughts than the comfort of my old friend, who had not the least need of an arm to lean upon. The drudgery the young are often called upon to go through for the sake of the old is not often of the sort that lends itself to the composition of a picture. It is certainly a pleasant sight to see a row of school-

girls rise in a crowded car to offer a seat to an elder lady; but I have sometimes observed a certain dismay in the countenance of the lady thus honored, as if she were saying to herself that the sprinkling of white in her hair must be more conspicuous than she had supposed. The dismay, however, always gives way to relief: for no one but an athlete finds it easy to stand in a car, and the girls are quite right to make their little sacrifice.

I once heard several ladies discussing Alice Brown's inimitable story of *Heartsease*, and the too devoted daughter-in-law of the delightful Old Lady Lamson. You remember that the young woman would never allow her mother-in-law to "lift a finger," and that when she was called away from home for a few days, the old lady of eighty, taking advantage of her absence, sat up most of the night to wash and iron, and to take a midnight stroll, — pleasures that she knew full well her careful daughter-in-law would never have allowed her to engage in. At last one gentle lady, whose conscience perhaps overbalanced her sense of humor, said hesitatingly, "But after all, when so many young people are not thoughtful to shield the old

from working too hard, is n't it almost a pity to make fun of the poor daughter-in-law who tried to be kind, even though she overdid her part?" Now, what is it to be kind? Is it not to enter so fully into the feelings of others that we try to do what is best for them? The Old Lady Lamson did need care, no doubt, but she was still a very capable woman. Her daughter-in-law sincerely wished her well. But if she had *loved* her, she would have known that the dear old lady needed activity. So I think that Miss Brown's lesson is not too severe.

The relations between the old and the young are really hard to adjust. The two ages can live happily together only by sacrifices on both sides; but they will never make the right sacrifices unless they love each other enough to try to take each other's point of view.

"I wish, oh, how I wish," I heard a daughter say anxiously, "that my mother, who is eighty-three, would only let us do what is best for her!" I did not know the mother. Perhaps she may have needed guidance as much as a little child, and perhaps, in taking her own way, she selfishly laid an unnecessary burden on her children. That is not

unusual in old people who cannot bear to give up the control they have exercised so long; but sometimes the younger generation are thinking of themselves and not of their parents when they wish their fathers and mothers would be guided. Sometimes it is the parents who are oppressed and sometimes the children.

Each case stands by itself, and no outsider can comprehend it. We must then forbear to criticise. Dearly as parents and children love each other, their relations are often a means of discipline to the most affectionate. To show why this must sometimes be, let us take a shining example,—King Edward VII. How tenderly he loved Queen Victoria it is impossible to say, but at all events he was apparently always a dutiful son. Yet consider what a discipline his life had been. Though destined to be king of a mighty nation, he was forced to be merely a cipher till he was almost sixty years old. He could not lay aside his inheritance, and, following a natural bent, make himself a power in some original way. He must have been aware, too, as the years fled by while he remained inactive, that the probability of his making a mark upon the world was

less and less. A man who has to learn a new profession at sixty is certainly handicapped. Of course it may be said that King Edward had been learning his profession all his life; but it is one thing to work as an observer, and another to work as an actor. Of course a statesman should not be too young. We seldom choose a President under fifty; but the men who are to be Presidents have been free all their lives to show the stuff that is in them. Probably Edward VII was a better king at sixty than he would have been at thirty, but his years of waiting must have been difficult. He could not wish that his mother should die, and yet while she lived he could hardly follow his own complete life. Only a philosopher or a saint could have done that. Yet the discipline he was called to receive could not be evaded and had to be met in the right way.

The life of his sister Victoria must have been still more trying. When she married Frederick of Prussia, she and her husband were perfectly united, and they determined to prepare themselves to do the utmost in their power for the good of Germany. They studied all their lives to fit themselves

to be an enlightened Emperor and Empress. And still the Emperor William lived on, an old man who, though upright, and living up to his own ideals, yet looked to ideals less lofty than those of his son. When he died, his son was already dying, and had no opportunity in the few months remaining to him to carry out the cherished plans he had been working upon all his life. And *his* son, who succeeded him, held very different standards, and the dowager Empress Victoria, retiring from the Court, had to see the hopes of a lifetime, which had drawn her always nearer and nearer to her husband, dashed forever to the ground. Under the two Williams, Germany has become a great nation, probably a greater nation than if Frederick had stood at the head of it: for Frederick and Victoria held that right should always take precedence of might, while even the good William I could not resist Bismarck, who would never lose an opportunity for a scruple. A German friend once said to me in reference to a questionable transaction which greatly increased the power of Germany, that of course it was not strictly just, but "Bismarck ist *schrecklich klug*." And so Vic-

toria's noble ideals were all effaced by the "terrible cleverness" of Bismarck. Yet it would have been criminal in her to wish for the death of her father-in-law, even if she had not loved him, — and he was well worthy of being loved, — and she was called upon to believe that what seemed to her to be a failure in righteousness was to be overruled for the highest good of her country. Here the tragedy of her life and that of her husband was clearly due to the simple, natural fact that the old Emperor lived more than eighty years.

I mention these cases because they are in everybody's mind; but all about us there are instances to be seen of men and women whose natural aims in life are frustrated by the necessity of subordinating them to some old person. When this discipline is plainly inevitable there is nothing to do but to bear it with patience and courage, remembering that the work we think we are fitted for in life is often not our true work at all, and that He Who has given us the discipline knows better than we do what is good for us. But when the discipline is not inevitable, there may be room for resistance.

I have in mind a fine old gentleman who lived far on into the eighties. He lost his wife in middle life, and all his affections were concentrated on an only daughter, who was in turn devoted to him, so that when she married it seemed most natural that her husband should make one of the household already established. The three lived together in harmony for many years, the young people gladly ministering to the old gentleman in every way. He was a man of strong mind. He had his own pursuits, and was a power in the community. The son-in-law and the daughter were also persons of strong mind. They, too, were efficient in the community. No one, looking on, could have thought that their lives were at all seriously hampered by their father, and it probably never so much as entered his head that it was so, — and yet there was a sense in which he domineered over them. The home was fashioned entirely after his own ideas. It was he who bought the new carpets and chose the new wall-papers. He engaged the cook and gave the orders for dinner. It was he who decided when a dinner-party should be given and who the guests were to be. The hours for meals and for

rising and for going to bed were arranged by him. The time for going into the country in the summer was selected to suit his convenience. In this way the young people became elderly people without once having the delight of making a home according to their own sweet will. It must not, however, be supposed that this old gentleman was a Mr. Turveydrop, or that his unselfish children were as blind to the facts in the case as Caddy Jellyby and Prince. The father was a high-minded man who would have been ready to sacrifice his life for a principle, or even for the children whom he loved, if that had happened to be the kind of sacrifice required of him. And he had such excellent ideas in regard to the management of a household that his home was a very agreeable one. Perhaps if the young people had been free to follow their own bent, the home would not have been essentially different in the eyes of other people. Still, they were not free, and they were much too clear-sighted not to be aware of it. They knew what they were doing when they chose to make their sacrifices for their father; the only difficulty was that he had no idea what they were

doing. They need not have lived with him; but it might have broken his heart if they had left him. They loved him, and for the sake of their love, they chose to sacrifice their freedom. All three were thoroughly well-bred people, and therefore there was never any friction in the family. The daughter had too much individuality not to present her father, from time to time, with her views on the household *régime*, and occasionally her quiet statement of the case prevailed with him. If not, she never urged the matter. And her husband, whose individuality was equally forcible, felt that, for every reason, it was better for differences of opinion to be presented to the old gentleman by the daughter.

Now I think it was unfortunate that these young people could not have the happiness of creating their own home atmosphere. I think their home would have been a greater blessing to every one if it could have expressed themselves. On the other hand, it would have been a sore trial to the old gentleman to give up the expression of his own individuality in his home. Perhaps if he had realized the magnitude of the

sacrifice he exacted, he would have chosen to live by himself, and let his children have a home near him. Such a solution of such a difficulty is often the best. But, in this case, it seems as if it really was better to combine the households: for the daughter was an only child and had no children of her own, so that there were none of the ordinary complications; and a home that is ordered *exactly* according to our own ideas does not usually afford sufficient scope for the daily self-sacrifice which is the necessary nutriment of love. I think the young people were right to give up their fancies, though I am not disposed to criticise them because their sense of humor led them to make an occasional dry comment on what they renounced. But what shall I say of the old gentleman? He ought not to have been blind. He ought to have known that, in the nature of things, the young people must wish to plan their own life. It was his house, to be sure, but I think he should have left the ordering of it largely to his daughter. It is very hard to be individual and to be unselfish at the same time. We certainly not only have a right to express ourselves, but it is only when we

express ourselves — that is, when we express the best that is in us — that we are of any use in the world; yet the more we crave expression for ourselves, the more mindful we should be that others have the same need, and we must stand ready to sacrifice what interferes with the best life of another. It is only by remembering this that we can be saved — if we have a strong personality — from becoming domineering old people.

Sometimes the friction between old and young is in reference to the merest trifles; but we all know by experience that we are as likely to be irritated by trifles as by affairs of importance. An old lady of my acquaintance, now eighty-four years of age, boasted the distinction of having in her girlhood a grandmother, a great-grandmother and a great-great-grandmother all living at the same time. Naturally the batteries of criticism turned upon the youngest generation were heavy. A girl friend, on a visit to New York, sent home to my acquaintance a daguerreotype of herself, the first daguerreotype the girl had ever seen. Delighted with the gift, she set it up on the mantel-

piece. She had hardly done so when, to use her own words, "Great-grandmother came in and saw it. She pointed to it with her long index finger, and exclaimed severely, 'An idol! an idol!'" The girl's mother came hastily forward to help the old lady off with her cloak, and dexterously interposing herself between great-grandmother and the offending picture, signed to her daughter to take it away. So the precious portrait was speedily locked up in a drawer, and the girl took care to keep the key in her own pocket.

My acquaintance, in telling the story, moralized a little on the theme, "*O tempora! O mores!*" Certainly, times are changed, and the present old lady of that vigorous line of grandmothers takes great satisfaction in modern progress, though she confesses that she does not like to see a young lady ride a bicycle, and no exigency will ever beguile her into the use of a post-card.

Sympathy is a large part of love, but it requires the loving exercise of the intellect to sympathize really with others. This is especially true of the relations between old and young. We sympathize

with those of our own age because we understand them. Their feelings are like our own. But the young and old have different feelings, and they cannot understand each other unless they think about each other. They must try to understand each other, and that involves a distinct act of the will. Even then, the young cannot always put themselves in the place of the old, for they have no experience to guide them. But the old ought to be able to put themselves in the place of the young, for they ought to remember what they used to feel. Yet it often seems as if the young, through imagination, more frequently have true sympathy with the old, than the old, through memory, have with the young. Other things being equal, bodily strength and vigor add to our power to love.

The demands that the young make on the old are not usually very great. The young feel strength for their own work, and so do not much care whether the old *do* anything or not, though sometimes they feel as Anthony Trollope says he did in contemplating his mother's activity, as if it were in the natural course of things that a lady

of fifty-eight should support the family. But ordinarily, when the young fail toward the old, it is by not entering into their feelings.

"How the spirit of curiosity does grow upon my mother!" a gentle lady once said to me, with an air of vexation foreign to her usual manner. She said this, because her mother, in passing through the room, had deliberately stopped to pick up some letters lying on the table, and had taken out her glasses to examine the superscriptions. There was nothing at all private about the letters, and the daughter had tossed them carelessly on the table where anybody might see the addresses. Indeed, young eyes could hardly fail to see them. I had seen them myself without taking the slightest interest in them. I am certain that the old lady had no wish to pry into her daughter's affairs, and that if she had supposed there was any objection to her knowing to whom the letters were written, she would never have touched them. But she could not see at a glance what the rest of us saw involuntarily. Her hearing was a little dull, too, and she knew very little of what was going on about her. I suppose putting on her

glasses to look at the letters was an automatic action to keep herself in touch with the family. I am sure the daughter's annoyance came from her want of comprehension of her mother and not from a fault of the mother: and yet I then made a resolution that when my eyes failed, I would never put on my glasses to look at the superscription of other people's letters.

I lately heard a lady say: "Twenty years ago I criticised my mother continually, — her speech, her table-manners, her dress, her choice of friends, her choice of books, and a thousand little habits that were unpleasant to me. Now I find myself doing exactly the same things she did, and I know very well why I do them. I drop crumbs on the floor because I can't see, and I mispronounce words because I can't hear how others pronounce them; I wear a loose dress because I am not strong enough to endure a close one; I am nervously afraid of being late when I am to take a train, because I am too weak to hurry. I can see that I irritate my young people exactly as I used to be irritated myself. And my habits would be still worse than they are if I did not remember how

I used to feel about my mother's shortcomings. Even with that lively remembrance, circumstances are too strong for me, and my repentance for my old intolerance grows deeper and deeper; but I hope all this experience helps me a little both in resisting my tendency to bad habits, and in forgiving my young people when they show their annoyance."

Though the young do not make great demands on the old, — indeed to many old people the tragedy of their lot seems to be that others make so few demands on them, — the old must often make great demands on the young. "The old bleat after the young," a busy physician once said to me, in explaining why he could not take any vacation, since he must then leave his feeble father, ninety-four years old, behind him in the city. He would not run the risk of letting the old man long for him in vain. "I have never been able," he said, "to *get even* with my parents." When I looked puzzled at this expression, he explained: "My father and mother did so much for me that nothing I have ever been able to do for them can in

the least compare with it. No sacrifice that I can make weighs anything in the balance." And so he stayed faithfully by his father till the old man died.

The demand that the very old are sometimes forced to make on the next generation who are already beginning to feel the infirmities of age is so great that it cannot be borne without almost crushing those who have to bear it; and so, as we grow old, we must all try to lighten the burden we lay on others as far as we can; but so far as this burden is necessary, it carries with it a blessing, even when the body faints under it.

At fifty or sixty, though we are comparatively young as regards those of eighty or ninety, we are yet so old as to feel sometimes that we should ourselves be cared for instead of being called on to care for others: and yet it is the young-old people who can often do most to make the very old people happy. Their own failing powers teach them a sympathy that is almost beyond the reach of the young. I know persons of fifty or sixty who feel alone because they are shut out from much of the society of the young. They long to do for

the young and keep their place with them. And this is right. It is well for both that old and young should associate with each other. But the sexagenarians who find themselves shut out from the young need not be lonely: for they have it in their power to be to the very old what they wish the young would be to them. To the contemporaries of their fathers and mothers they still seem young; but they have stores of memories and tastes in common with them, and in sharing these they find a new and often delightful companionship that saves them from the loneliness they had begun to suffer.

What can the old give to the young? Can they give experience? Not often. New times call for new manners, and even if it were not so, the young insist upon their own experience. Can they give wisdom? Sometimes. But the wisdom of age means nothing to others, unless it has been learned by actually living it, even though the precepts may be true. "When you have learned a thing in a book," said Mr. Squeers, "then go and know it. C-l-e-a-n-w-i-n-d-e-r, clean winder. When the

boy at Dotheboys Hall knows this out of book, he goes and does it." This according to Mr. Squeers is the "practical system," the "regular education system."

Wisdom is something higher than experience; but, unless it is based upon it, when we try to impart it to others, it does not ring true.

XIII

AFTER FOURSCORE

"OLD!" says an octogenarian of my acquaintance, speaking of a contemporary. "*He* is n't old — not much past eighty." Another old gentleman speaks naïvely of the "Harmon girls" — one of the sisters being over ninety — just as he has been in the habit of doing ever since he was a boy. I know an attractive old lady, already past eighty, who often remarks, "When I am old, I am going to do" this or that. Her grandchildren smile; but she speaks in perfect good faith. No doubt if the question were put squarely before her, she would acknowledge that she is already old. She is not exempt from aches and pains, and she has reason enough to answer as another of my octogenarian friends used to do when anybody congratulated her on her wonderful vigor: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow." But I suppose that she has grown old

so gently and gradually, relinquishing one youthful habit after another, that she has never realized how much her whole manner of life has changed. In youth and middle-age, we all say, "When I am old, I shall do" so and so, understanding that a time may come when we cannot do what we are then doing; and so with my friend. She is thinking of the best way to meet disabilities to come, being happily oblivious to her present ones.

"Old age" is a large phrase. Most people know something of its reality at fifty; but there is a world-wide difference between fifty and a hundred, so that the most elementary studies in age must take note of the conditions among the very old. When the descent of life is gradual, it is not usually painful, and the pilgrim lies down to rest at the foot almost as one might go to sleep. To those who are blessed with a healthy body, and who live rationally, such an experience is not uncommon. A clear mind, interested in the life about one, and a large heart, forgetting one's self in loving others, are also factors in the same result. Worry entangles the nerves and is disastrous. And many people suffer unavoidably from the strain of both

the physical burdens and of the mental and moral troubles they are appointed to endure. Few lives are without strain; and could we wish them to be? Struggle develops character.

Whatever the reason may be, even the best-endowed men and women, and even those who have lived most wisely, seldom reach the age of eighty without some definite breaking. I have watched many who have worn their years so lightly till after seventy that no one thought much of their being old, even though it was fitting to concede certain privileges to them. But even in such cases, a change comes at about seventy-five, and "if, by reason of strength," their years "be fourscore, yet is their strength labor and sorrow," or, if not "labor and sorrow," still pain and weakness. Now, it is of those in their last decade that I wish to speak.

And first, let me say that those are happiest themselves and do most to make others happy who think and say least about being old even after the eightieth milestone is passed. There is a hopeful attitude in the octogenarian who talks about what he shall do *when he is old*, that helps him to do

more now than if he declares life to be over for him. He may not be able, like General Radetsky, at eighty-two, to turn back the wheels of progress, by stamping out a revolution in Italy, or even to rival the famous Samuel Whittemore of Arlington, who, at the age of eighty, killed three British soldiers on April 19, 1775, and then, after being shot, bayonetted, beaten, and left for dead, had vitality enough left to live to the age of ninety-eight; but we have all heard of the old man who planted an acorn when his son and grandson refused to do it on the ground that it would take an oak so long to grow that they should never have any advantage from it. But he lived to sit under the shade of the tree. The planting of that acorn might have offset many years of helplessness: for the old man conferred a blessing on the neighborhood that continued for generations after he was gone.

I once read a short paper in some magazine which set forth a principle calling for emphasis here. "When I was thirty years old," said the writer, "I often said to myself, of something I wished to have power to do, 'Oh, if I had only

begun to practice this at twenty, what a help it would be now!' But at fifty, I found myself saying, 'Oh, if I could have realized at thirty what it was still in my power to do!' And at seventy, I say, 'Oh, if I had only begun at fifty!'"

So my friend who became blind at eighty-two did not say that it was not worth while for him to try to learn to do anything more in this world; he set himself diligently to see what he could still do. He is now eighty-eight. I met him the other day, and he mentioned, with a triumphant smile, that he could chop and split wood, and make a fire. A few days later I received a letter from him, written in an excellent hand. He had not told me that he had taught himself to write. His letter enclosed a typewritten essay on the *Compensations of Blindness* which I should like to incorporate in full into this chapter. He evidently finds a new zest in life in learning to do one thing after another without his eyes. Life is still progress to him. Everybody enjoys his society, and no one can see the placid expression of his face or hear his pleasant voice without believing that he is happy. He will, I am sure, welcome the great

change which must soon come to him; yet, meanwhile, he finds his life very good. He repeated to me, in a cheerful tone, Whittier's lines, —

> "And so beside the Silent Sea
> I wait the muffled oar;
> No harm from Him can come to me
> On ocean or on shore."

"I have been making a call," said an old lady of eighty-nine, with a twinkle in her eye. In these days, it had become her prerogative to let her friends call upon her; so it was evident that her call must have some special significance. "I have been to call upon a lady ninety-eight years of age," she continued, "and it is not very often now that I have an opportunity to call on anybody nine years older than I am myself." You see she realized her social duties still. All her other friends must call upon her. But here it was plainly her place to make the call, and she made it with delight, though she was so frail that the exertion demanded was by no means small. Now that is a beautiful spirit to see in a person almost ninety years old. Indeed, it would be well to begin to cultivate that spirit at fifty, or even earlier.

I remember a fine old lady who, when her strength failed so that she could no longer live the life of active usefulness to which she had been accustomed, was still one of the greatest benefactors of the village because she made such wise suggestions to her friends who were still active but who had less insight into the real needs of the people. Even in making her will, she continued to sow good seed. She had outlived all her large family, and the will by which she disposed of her small property was full of details that were touching to those who stood near enough to know her reasons for them. Two or three hundred dollars here, and two or three hundred dollars there made dull reading to a stranger; but in every case that trifle of money fell like dew on parched ground: for it was given to those who were bearing the burden and heat of the day, and who saw no possibility of providing shelter for themselves. And the last clause of the will directed that the bric-a-brac in her own room should be divided among the Sunday-School children.

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make men better be.

Nor standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald and sere.
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May.
Although it fall and die that night —
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

A long life to no purpose, — how very sad! A short life filled to the brim, — how beautiful! A young life, full of powers and possibilities, intent only on its own gratification, — how grievous! But an aged life, frail and circumscribed, yet one in which every spark of the dying embers is used to give light and warmth to some other life, — how rich it is!

It is a trick of speech to talk about the garrulity of the old. My own observation would lead me to think that the old talk much less than the young. But their conversation is often on subjects that do not interest their hearers, and so they are voted tedious. I will not altogether defend them. It is right that the old as well as the young should remember their interlocutor, and

that they should be sympathetic in conversation instead of indulging in a monologue. But their impatient listeners often miss something that is priceless when they cut short the reminiscences of their old friends. No book can give us the vivid realization of the recent past that we get from such conversation. The longer a man lives, the more valuable his recollections become. The battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815; yet I am proud to say that in my girlhood I once talked with a man who was present on that field. He was a boy when he went into that action, and when I saw him he was an old, old man, retired from service after having risen to be general-in-chief of the whole army of one of the German states. When there is only one survivor of a battle left, he may tell its story over and over again, and no new listener who is not altogether wrapped up in his own petty every-day affairs will call him garrulous.

Another old friend of my youth lived to the age of ninety-eight, and from him I once had an exciting description of the panic in these United States in the early days of the nineteenth century, when

Napoleon I was triumphantly binding one European country after another to his victorious chariot wheels, till it was apprehended that in the dearth of new worlds to conquer, he would soon pounce upon our young republic. The same old gentleman once gave me a lively account of his voyage up the Hudson in Fulton's steamer, the *Clermont*, on her first trip from New York to Albany in 1807, he being then a very young fellow, and almost losing this chance of a lifetime by the dilatoriness of a lady who was to accompany him, and who stopped too long to "prink."

If young people could realize at all how much their study of history would be enlivened by conversations with their great-grandparents, they would, perhaps, oftener think it worth while to sit down beside them and ask them a few leading questions about the past. The old people would be delighted to answer in full: for here they are on their own ground. They know their subject, and they know, too, and rejoice in the consciousness, that the gift they bestow is unique as well as valuable, — that they alone have it to give.

No one has learned all the lessons of life who has not had the discipline of loneliness. Most people who reach fourscore have this discipline. I have known a few beautiful exceptions. Sometimes a husband and wife who have been devoted to each other all their lives live to the same great age and die within a few days of each other. I have known two congenial maiden sisters who made a delightful home together till they were both past eighty. Then one drooped, and quickly died, and within the month the other, too, had passed. Often a mother or father is tenderly watched to the last by an affectionate child; but in that case, there must be, after all, an experience of loneliness, because the child belongs to a younger generation, and is shut out from much of the parent's past.

In the numerous cases where the old person lives alone, or has only servants about him, or even when he is a member of an affectionate family, loneliness becomes a deep experience. Many people sink under it completely, and I have often wondered if it might not be as potent as any physical cause in producing the enfeeblement of mind

so frequent in extreme old age. In the prime of life we can fight against loneliness by work; but when the working days are over, the resistant power cannot be in work. Is there any resistant power anywhere left to us?

> "When the world is cold to you,
> Go build fires to warm it,"

Miss Larcom says. The fires the old build must be kindled in the heart. If the family have all gone away on a pleasure excursion and have left you alone to brood over your weakness, is it really necessary to brood? Would n't this be a good time to make a new pinball for that careless grandchild who forgot to kiss you when she went, and who has lost the pinball you made for her at Christmas? Suppose you make it of black velvet and yellow satin, because she likes those colors. You work so slowly now, and are so weak when you are excited by any disturbance that it is fortunate for you to have a whole day of perfect quiet to fashion your little gift. It keeps your hands and thoughts busy half the day, and then you are tired enough to take a little nap. And when the gay party come bursting into the dining-room at

supper-time, the corners of your mouth twitch with a pleased little smile as you think what is under the tiny maid's plate. And then she finds your gift, and cries out, "Hurrah! Grandma! I know who made this," and comes and gives you a perfectly spontaneous hug far sweeter than the perfunctory kiss she forgot in the morning. I am not saying that you had not reason to feel chilled in the morning, but only suggesting that the chill need not last all day.

Even a pinball may be an impossible achievement. The days come when the grasshopper is a burden. But if the middle-aged lady who has just called on your daughter-in-law had only thought to ask for you, you think you could still have entertained her quite as well as your daughter-in-law, — better, in fact, for your daughter-in-law could think of nothing to talk about but the servants, though she tells you that the lady has just been to visit the Whittier birthplace: so you are pretty sure she would have been interested in hearing some of your own reminiscences of Whittier. Well, she does n't care a fig for you, that is clear, and she probably does n't care much for Whittier,

either. Why should you trouble yourself about her? (I have heard of old ladies crying for such neglect as this.) You say to yourself that if she had asked for you you could have shown her that autograph of Whittier you have, and you have heard that she is interested in autographs. Well, she does n't know what she has lost. Does n't she? Why should she lose anything? You take the autograph out of its envelope and read in Whittier's clear, exquisite handwriting, the words, —

> "He needs the earthly city not
> Who hath the heavenly won,"

and you realize that the words apply to something besides cities. When your daughter-in-law returns Mrs. ——'s call, you entrust the precious autograph to her. "Tell your friend that hearing she had been to see Whittier's birthplace, I thought she might be interested in this," you say. She is delighted. She brings it back in person, and you have a charming hour with her. Perhaps she tells you to your face that when she heard that your daughter-in-law's mother-in-law was coming to live with her, she had no idea how much that was going to add to her own pleasure, but that now

she has seen you, she hopes you will let her call often. You still think she might have thought of you before, and you are perfectly aware that as a point of etiquette she should have made the first advances; but still you do not see any reason why at your age you should allow a point of etiquette to interfere either with her pleasure or your own, and so you make a friend. Henceforth you have fewer lonely hours; but that is not the reason you are glad you made the advance. You did not do it for your own sake but for hers. You meant to give her pleasure and you succeeded. Your own pleasure is simply a reflex. Of course you might not have succeeded. And when you try and fail, sometimes your heart grows cold. But, after all, is it not worth while to try? Why should you take counsel of pride and mortification instead of love and hope? It sometimes seems, I know, as if a tender heart is more frequently bruised than a hard one; and yet who would not choose the tender heart?

A cheerful octogenarian friend often states it as her conviction that fads are a great blessing to

the old. They save them from loneliness and give their minds a constant interest. She herself has two fads, as she chooses to call them. She collects postage stamps. As she is very neat and her eyesight still holds out, she is able to keep her albums in admirable condition, and she works over each new stamp with affectionate care. Time is not an object with her, so she can spend as much of it as is needed in removing the stamp carefully from its envelope and in placing it perfectly in line in her book. She says she has learned more geography from her stamps than she ever did at school, and they have given her a living interest in the whole world. There are days when she passes hours over her albums. And it is her delight to set children working in this direction. She always has a store of duplicate stamps sufficient to start the little amateur well on the way, and she is unwearied in teaching him how to keep his album in good order. Incidentally her stamps have been the means of her making many fast friends among the young people. And they have often led to a charming correspondence with other collectors. Probably anybody who collects anything would find

that it led to the same experiences. I believe collectors seldom suffer from *ennui*. My friend's other fad has been one of the main delights of her whole life. She has always had a garden, usually an extensive and beautiful one, and even in circumstances so adverse as to have damped the ardor of most people, she has always kept it creditable. Anybody who creates beauty as the maker of a garden does contributes to the happiness of the world even when he is unaffectedly pursuing his own happiness. I have several old friends whose gardens are a blessing to the whole neighborhood. But my old lady past eighty cannot dig and weed as she once could. When she was fifty years old, trouble threatened to overwhelm her; but she conquered it by going into her garden at four o'clock every morning, and digging, and weeding, and transplanting and watering, till from sheer fatigue she forgot the tragedy overhanging her life, and all the neighbors rejoiced in the beauty that bloomed before their eyes. Now she cannot do all this. But she does not give up her garden. She has a chair carried into the midst of it, and there she sits and directs another what to do. She has a little

hoe with a short handle which she can use herself from her chair, and so she succeeds in putting some finishing touches to the work herself. Last year the leading seedsman in the region made her heart swell with pride by declaring that while he had sold to other people many packages of as good seeds as he had sold to her, her flowers were the finest that had been produced from any of them. With her garden in the summer and her postage stamps in the winter, she says her time and thoughts are so occupied that she cannot be lonesome even if she must often be left alone. Of course neither a garden nor a stamp-album can fill the heart; but her garden and stamp-album bring her into pleasant social relations with so many people that her heart, as well as her time and thoughts, is the fuller for them. "Everybody should have some fad," she declares with conviction.

Some of our early fads fail us as we grow older. Many of my botanical friends grieve that something of the zest of life is lost to them now that their eyes are too old for mosses and lichens, even with the help of the microscope. Others find a

compensation in the study of mushrooms, these being large enough to satisfy the needs of old eyes. Ornithologists find themselves heavily handicapped when they can no longer hear the notes of the birds; but sometimes they can attract their feathered friends about the door by scattering cracked nuts over the snow in winter, and so learn a new side of bird-life. Most old people have to exert their wits a little to find new occupations to take the place of those that are no longer within their reach.

Gentle exercise is good for the old, and we never get beyond the need of play of some kind. Those who try to do without recreation do so at their peril: though, to be sure, what is recreation for one is not so for another. Some old people find whist an unfailing resource, especially if they have learned it thoroughly in youth. It does not require very good eyes, and it has the advantage of making one an acceptable companion to younger people. But a poor whist-player among connoisseurs — we all know that is a position requiring grace in all the parties. And perhaps it is hardly worth while to spend the years of youth needed to per-

fect one's self in the game for the sake of having that resource in age. A quiet game of cribbage with a friend is better for some of us.

I asked an old lady of ninety-three the other day what amusements she could still enjoy. Her eyes sparkled as she answered, "Backgammon." She is a woman whose whole life has been earnest. I have heard that even as a young woman all her thoughts and occupations were serious, that her whole mind was bent on doing her duty. And she has done it well. When she was hardly more than a girl, she founded a school for girls such as was almost unknown in the country at that time. She has given money and thought and work to it all her life, and has stamped it with her own noble, upright, unselfish character. Thousands of girls have owed the inspiration of their lives to her, directly or indirectly. She is a rich woman who has given thought to every dollar she has spent, meaning that it should bless the world. And her work still goes on. I do not mean simply that the institutions she has fostered still flourish. They will flourish long after she has passed beyond our sight; but I mean that she still gives personal

attention to new projects, and decides whether to help them or not. She is by no means a drone in the hive. But she needs recreation, and she gets it from backgammon.

Another old lady I know finds her recreation in dominoes. And some of my friends who, alas, must live alone, amuse themselves with *solitaire*. All such games are suited to old people. They do not require good eyes or good ears or strong hands; they can be played with the most casual acquaintances. They rouse a gentle interest without exciting. They keep the mind busy without taxing it.

Among my own aged relatives there have been several who passed their days in great satisfaction in reading novels. So far as my observation goes the people who read novels with interest in old age are those who have done a good deal of solid reading in their prime, and who are attracted by really good novels. I think the taste for trashy stories wears itself out long before fourscore. Furthermore, few persons find an abiding satisfaction in lifelike novels who have not a kindly interest in their fellow beings. Then when the infirmities of age shut them out from some of the social life

they love, they make silent friends with the delightful people of fiction.

I have known one octogenarian who read all Shakespeare's plays through every year, and came at last to knowing them almost by heart. But he was one of those wonderful old men of whom we often hear but whom we seldom see, who at eighty-three could read the newspaper without glasses. It is said, to be sure, that the eyesight is sometimes recovered in extreme age, though such a recovery is often supposed to presage death. In the only instance I have personally known it was not so. A man of sixty-four, who had used glasses for a dozen or more years, suffered a terrible illness. Erysipelas in the face was the disease, and it seemed for months that if he should live, he must inevitably be blind. Yet he recovered, and for the remaining twenty years of his life, he could read the finest print without glasses. It is always well to look at the future hopefully. I have known the hearing of a deaf old lady to improve surprisingly without any apparent cause. Another old lady of eighty-four, who has just lost her abundant hair from an illness, writes me that it

is coming in again beautifully, and adds that her grandfather cut a tooth after he was eighty, — the latter a doubtful blessing perhaps.

After so long a digression, it may seem out of place to come back to the subject of loneliness in old age, but nevertheless, I cannot yet leave it. For even the bravest and most cheerful old people cannot always escape loneliness. At fourscore most of the friends of a lifetime have gone from our sight. We have not many contemporaries. We have learned by experience the truth we have always been hearing, that the young cannot love the old as the old love the young. We see why this is so and why it is good that it should be so, and though, if we have ourselves a loving heart, we are not likely to be left without many good friends, the bravest of us must feel sometimes, like Wordsworth's old Matthew, —

> "Many love me : but by none
> Am I enough beloved."

This is especially true of those who must live alone. It is not well to live alone. We all need the society of others not only for our happiness but for our character. The little unnoticed sacri-

fices that one is called upon to make every day, and even every hour, in a family, nourish the better life. It is hard to do without them. And yet it is sometimes necessary to live alone. A friend says emphatically, "I will never do that." She says she has watched one friend after another who has made the experiment, and that in every case, sooner or later, the mind has been warped. She says that sooner than do that, she would cast her own lot with any charitable institution that would accept her services, and work for others as best she could. I believe her theory is right. Without money she could not do that, and when she is old and feeble she might not be able to save herself from being a burden in a charitable institution. But a great many people find themselves left alone in their age, with just the little income that will keep them from want in their own homes, but with too little to allow them to give a home to a companion. It requires skill so to use their small property that they may be saved from the almshouse at last. This life is narrow and depressing. Many sink under it, but not all.

I am thinking, for example, of an old man

whose wife died twenty years ago and left him alone in their neat little cottage. He did not choose to go to any of his married children, and has lived alone ever since. He does his own housework, and the cottage shines with cleanliness. He cultivates his garden. He does odd pieces of work for the neighbors, sets up stoves, and mows the lawns. He is a slender old man who looks as if a breath would blow him away; but he is hale nevertheless, and keeps his sweet tenor voice so well that he is still an acceptable addition not only to the village choir, but to the choral union of the neighboring town, whither he goes by trolley one evening every week all winter to practice oratorios under a famous leader. A daughter's family is not far away, and he has a host of cousins in the village. Once a week he recalls his old war experiences at the Grand Army Post. So you see he is not without congenial society. He does a thousand little kindnesses for his neighbors, and helps the widow who lives next door in her business. He has reason to feel that his life is useful to others besides himself. I am inclined to think he is quite as happy as if he were crowded into a corner in his daugh-

ter's home. His mind certainly continues alert at eighty, after all these lonely years.

No two cases can be alike, and it sometimes happens that an old person can live the noblest life by withdrawing himself voluntarily from others. The mother of a family, for example, often has not strength enough to give both to her children and to her parents. The children need her most, and the parent who thoughtfully withdraws all claim to her attention, even though he sits alone all day, is contributing to the welfare of the family in the best way in his power. When a sacrifice like this is made freely, prompted by a loving heart, I do not believe that heart will corrode even in loneliness, and, in most cases, I believe in the end such love will be appreciated and returned. The willingness to withdraw when our company is really embarrassing to others is very rare. The discipline is painful, but nothing can be more wholesome than to learn humbly that sometimes we must be all alone. If we are willing to learn the lesson, we shall not be left without the help of our Unseen Friend. May not this experience of loneliness be one of the bless-

ings of old age, by bringing us nearer to that Friend?

For some of the old a last grievous experience is waiting, — the mind fails in the end. How many of us pray to die before that time shall come! But the prayer is not always answered. The reason such a fate should be permitted, and especially to any one who has used the mind nobly for a lifetime, is so mysterious that faith falters in searching for it. The same question confronts us in insanity. In the greatest of other trials, we may say there is a blessing to those who bear them well; but how can we say this when the power to bear the trial is completely lost? That such an affliction sometimes brings out the noblest virtues in the friends of the sufferer is true; but what of the sufferer himself? Who can dare to answer such a question confidently? And yet there is something I should like to say about it. Even in insanity the mind works sometimes toward moral ends, though the guiding power seems to be lost. My own experience is very slight; still, I have talked with some insane friends at moments when the cloud

half lifted, and it has seemed to me that I could catch a glimpse of the working of the spirit. The invalid can no longer make his life effective outwardly; he has lost control of himself, and yet a leaven seems to be working within him. He is so isolated from us that we cannot understand him; but the experience may not be without meaning in his own development, even though, in case of his recovery, he may forget it. It is the brain, the instrument of the mind, that fails; but the mind itself — is that lost? What part has the mysterious subconscious self to play in working out our final salvation? If these questions press upon us in looking at the insane, they suggest themselves as surely when we watch the gradual failure of the mind of the old. The instrument of the mind is destroyed. Our dear one can no longer tell us of the half-formed thoughts brooding in that wasted brain. Because we cannot interpret them, are we sure they are not there? Watch the caterpillar growing more and more rigid and lifeless as it forms the chrysalis. We should call it dead, at last, if no one had ever seen a chrysalis burst. It is motionless for months. Are those months wasted?

By no means, because in silence and apparent quiescence, the little creature is rearranging all its organs in preparation for a wonderful new life. The shell grows frailer and frailer, and when the splendid butterfly is fully formed, it is suddenly cast aside. Was the butterfly ready when the caterpillar curled itself up in a chrysalis? No, indeed. Such an analogy proves nothing, of course; yet it is suggestive. At least we need not bow our heads in despair and say it is impossible that there should be a wonderful and beautiful undercurrent in the life of our failing friend, pitiful as it is when looked at from the outside. We know so little of this great universe. Knowing so little, we must act according to the light we have, and do our best to preserve the health of the brain. Nourishing food, pure air, gentle exercise, keep the brain as well as the body in good condition. Holding ourselves aloof from our fellow creatures and brooding over our own troubles increase enormously any tendency to brain deterioration. Even in extreme age those who constantly interest themselves in new studies and scenes and occupations seem thereby to feed the brain and cause it to expand;

nothing seems to be so preservative of the mind as active love. And yet, the brain of even the most active lover of his kind may fail. We cannot avert the misfortune from ourselves or from those dear to us. If it falls upon those we love, let us bear with them so patiently and affectionately that we may learn from our own hearts that it will not be a misfortune without compensation if others should have to bear with us in the same way.

Happily the loss of the mind is not very common, even among those who live to a great age, and in most cases it does not last very long. We need not anticipate it. But let us believe what it is certainly most reasonable to believe: that even such an affliction carries with it a blessing.

XIV

THE RENEWAL OF EMOTION

In connection with Memorial Day, a veteran of the Civil War, addressing a schoolroom full of young people, who had grown up long after the close of the war, began his remarks with the words: "It is well that we should sometimes turn our minds to the past and renew our emotions."

He was a man who had fought his battles for conscience' sake, and as he recalled the old experiences, his words thrilled his listeners. Because he renewed his own emotion, he was able to rouse a kindred noble feeling in those about him.

It is rather the fashion to preach that we should always keep our faces turned to the future. Now, why do we think it is a virtue to look toward the future rather than toward the past? It is the attitude of hope, and perhaps of help. In looking toward the past, the attitude is often that of regret; but it is not always so. It is never so when

we use the past to help us in the present, or if we love the past for what was best in it.

The old are accused of dwelling too much in the past. Of course it is always delightful to see old people follow the injunction

> "Act, act in the living Present,
> Heart within and God o'erhead";

and if we are to do this, it is no doubt necessary to obey the previous injunction of the poet, and

> "Let the dead Past bury its dead";

but when we renew any noble emotion, we are dealing with the living, not the dead, Past, and if the emotion has ever borne fruit in us, it has become the strongest possible incentive for acting in the living Present. I believe that the quiet years when old people are thinking over their past have a great part to play in the unfolding of the character — for the character is never finished even if we live to be a hundred. Of course, if we think of the past simply as a series of incidents, the thought is of no more use to us than counting a billion would be; but when we recall its emotions, if our life has been worthy, we are often filled with a tenderness and

a heroism which renews our present life, and makes us still a power to inspire others to do what we may be too weak to do ourselves. We often hear it said that some old person is greatly softened by age. A grandmother, sitting quietly in a corner, remembers her childish grief over an unsympathetic word. She remembers, too, that in the stress of middle life she sometimes spoke sharply to her own children. Her heart melts, and she has only the sweetest words for her grandchildren. She is not afraid of spoiling them; she remembers so keenly when others spoke too harshly to her, and when she herself spoke too harshly to others, and it is well that she remembers these things.

The man who honestly sacrificed all his hopes and ambitions in 1861, because he really believed that laying down his life might help to deliver a race from bondage, cannot remember such a consecration of himself and be willing, forty years later, to exploit the Filipinos for his own aggrandizement. The past emotion binds him to spend the strength still left him in blessing.

Some of my friends burn every letter as soon as it is answered, no matter how full it is of love and

tenderness. Perhaps it is the only way to do, if you would not have a houseful of old letters that you have not the heart to burn, and that may be carelessly handled by those who come after you. Yet I know old people, left much alone, who pass happy hours in reading over letters that meant everything to them fifty years ago, and who find in the renewal of the old emotion a guarantee that love does not die, and that old friends are waiting for them just beyond the veil with hearts as full of the old love as they know their own to be.

An old lady tells me that it has recently fallen to her lot to look over and burn hundreds of old sermons. Her father was a minister, and at his death, the family had not the heart to burn unread the sermons he had worked over so faithfully ; so they lay for several decades untouched. Now his daughter is the last of her family. She could not leave the sermons to fall into careless hands, and she could not bear to make a general bonfire of them, though she knew they were not great sermons, and she believed their work was done. She felt that she must look them over and reserve

a very few that would recall her father most vividly to her. And so she began to examine them. She says that it was as if her whole early life rose up before her. She came upon texts that she remembered as a little girl ; she saw her father standing before her in the pulpit, and heard his earnest voice. Perhaps she remembered little of the sermon, but the text recalled the old emotion, the resolve to follow the blessed life her father was trying to point out. She came to sermons that she remembered to have been preached in crises of the family life, and she read them with an almost passionate interest because of the unseen writing between the lines. She recalled the thrill of her girlhood when, the morning after a disastrous fire, the church being full of people who felt themselves to be ruined, her father rose and read, in a firm voice, the text, "And again I say, Rejoice." Even if she could not now look back on the forty years of prosperity to the principal sufferers that followed the fire, — and were in a certain sense due to it, for the fire caused manufacturers to make desirable changes in their business, — even if the disaster had proved as irreparable

as it then seemed, she could never forget the courage that swelled in her heart when her father called on all his hearers to meet the calamity bravely, trusting in the Providence that afflicts only to bless. There are clouds about her life now that, it seems, will never lift. But when she read the old text, she says, her spirit rose to meet any trouble.

There was the sermon on Slavery that set her heart beating with sympathy for the oppressed, the sermon after the firing on Sumter, the one after the dreadful news from Bull Run, the hopeful one after the Emancipation Proclamation, the sorrowing one after the death of Lincoln, the one of thanksgiving for the return of peace. She says she felt, as she read, that no country in which the emotions roused by such sermons were common to the masses of people, as she knew they had been, could soon lose such an inspiration. She found herself readier to say, "*Greif an, mit Gott*," in meeting the perplexing and discouraging questions of the new century. Too old and feeble to hope to do much to stem the tide of evils that sometimes seemed to her to advance with formidable force, as

she read the daily papers, still, how could she be a pessimist when the renewal of the old emotions sent the blood bounding again through her heart? The sermons had to be burned in the end, but they had not lain idle a quarter of a century in vain.

She says, in speaking of this experience, that it was unique in another way. It taught her to enter into her father's life as, with all her love for him, she had never done before. Though he had destroyed thousands of his old sermons himself, yet there were some left belonging to his earliest ministry. There were even essays at sermons in an almost boyish hand, written when he was in the Theological Seminary, with here and there a Hebrew phrase that showed how his new study was putting a new meaning into the old texts. There was his ordination sermon, his first sermon when he was settled in his first parish. His daughter found herself living over with him his fresh young life, and rejoicing in realizing its high ideals, followed so faithfully in the years she could remember herself.

Among the sermons were a few other treasures that brought the tears to her eyes. I will speak of

only one. It was a boy's lecture on Paris, written more than three quarters of a century ago, when Napoleon was still wearing out his life on St. Helena. The lady knew the history of this lecture. Though her father lived in a small farming town where even now there is no railroad, and where mails were received only once a week, there was abundant intellectual energy there, and the boys of the town determined to give a course of lectures of their own. And so her father set himself to study Paris. He had no guidebooks, he had no encyclopædias, and nobody in those days had any photographs. But he was enterprising. He succeeded in getting some cuts of public buildings, and then, on large sheets of brown paper he copied them in ink, so that he gave a *bona fide* illustrated lecture long before the stereopticon was invented. He searched the newspapers and such books as could be found at home and among his neighbors for materials for his description of Paris, and though his months of labor could not teach him as much about the city as an hour in its streets would have done, who shall say that his townspeople were not the wiser for the boy's work? His daughter could

not burn those neat pen-and-ink drawings on brown paper, and she says that the thought of that boy, toiling over his self-imposed task so long ago, gives her new respect for the possibilities in every boy she sees now.

It is no light blessing that in studying reverently the relics of the immediate past, we are so often taught to know and love our parents more tenderly. Children love their parents, but few understand them. That they can learn to understand them more and more fully after their living companionship is over, is a gage of immortality. It shows us possibilities of a transcendent life, of a perfecting of the germs of love that we know here. Its suggestions are unspeakable.

Sometimes the reverence old people pay to the memory of their own kindred takes a curiously pathetic and even abnormal form. For example, I knew a mother and daughter who were often at variance. The daughter, whose taste was somewhat more cultivated than the mother's, was constantly wishing to make changes in the furnishings of the house, and this the mother resisted. The mother died, and the daughter was free to do

as she chose. And then, lo! she seemed completely metamorphosed. So far from wishing to make any of the changes she had so long advocated, the study of her life was to preserve everything precisely as her mother left it. This may have been due to the tardy prickings of conscience; but perhaps it was because the tenderness newly welling up in her heart, as she thought of her who was gone, made the home her mother had planned so dear to her that it seemed more beautiful than any dwelling arranged according to her own fancy. She should have felt the tenderness while her mother lived, and have avoided those little bickerings. Then perhaps she would not have been so unwilling to make the changes she had wished for, changes that would certainly have made her home more beautiful both for herself and for other people. And yet who knows? It is said that Ruskin's house was full of incongruous furnishings, because he would not part with any of the ugly old furniture associated with his parents, though he had exquisite taste when selecting for himself. And who would not feel his house to be more beautiful because he did preserve the

associations? If the mission of outward beauty is to nourish inward beauty, if the material form is given simply to suggest the soul, then the most suggestive furnishings are the most beautiful.

I am not of those who scour the country for old furniture, old books, and old china. Why should I want an ugly piece of crockery simply because it is old? But my own grandmother's old china and silver, and the little books of French exercises written in her neat girlish hand, or the ponderous calf-bound editions of Virgil and Homer that my own grandfather read in college have a meaning to me far beyond their intrinsic worth. They renew emotion, and the older we grow, the more we need to have emotion renewed within us.

A wholesome way to renew emotion is to share it with a child. The comradeship of little children with their grandfathers and grandmothers is proverbial. The famous friendship of Sir Walter Scott and little Johnny Lockhart is not essentially different from thousands and thousands of such friendships that are unrecorded. The childlike spirit in the old that makes such comradeship natural is not the result of "second childhood," though it

sometimes appears in that distorted form, but it comes from a renewal of the early emotions of life through love for the little child. It is good for both that the old should tell the story of their lives to the young, — in fragmentary anecdotes, of course, for no one sits down deliberately to tell the whole tale, — and that the young should listen to it. It enriches the emotional life of both.

I have seen those in whom the enthusiasm for nature had begun to wane with failing senses glow with all the old spirit in taking a walk through the woods with a child. The child, with its sharp eyes, finds the flowers and the lichens and the minerals and the chrysalids, and with its sharp ears hears the music of the birds, the chattering of the squirrels and the hum of the insects; and, in answering the child's questions, the years roll away, and the delight of youth comes back. Just this reminder of what the outside world used to be is needed to revivify the dim vision and the dull ears.

We would not "burn in the socket" with "hearts as dry as summer dust." Bitter suffering would be better than that.

If the emotion is abnormal and fetters us to the past, let us put it away from us. But if it rouses the love within us that leads us forward freely into the boundless future, let us cherish it.

Who would be like the *Haunted Man* of Dickens? He prayed to lose the memory of grief and wrong. He thought he could keep the best of his life when he had forgotten his pain. And when his prayer was granted, all tenderness was withered in his heart, and he no longer knew how to help his fellow men. With him, let us pray the prayer he learned to pray at last: "Lord, keep my memory green."

XV

A LAST LESSON IN FRIENDSHIP

WHO ever read without a shudder Thackeray's remark, "Aged people are seldom capable of bearing friendship," or without determining within himself that it should not be true in his own case?

We all know hundreds of warm friendships among the old. Did not Scott find the Ladies of Llangollen, old and stout and prosaic, as devoted to each other as when they were young and beautiful and romantic at the time Madame de Genlis describes them? Indeed, the opinion is general that old friendships are dearer than new, and that they grow dearer to the end. Has Thackeray's merciless scalpel laid bare the truth about a cherished fallacy? Was Charles Lamb thinking more tenderly of the same thing when he wrote, —

> "And some they have died, and *some they have left us*,
> All, all are gone, the old familiar faces"?

Let us tell the truth at any rate. Everybody knows that the old seldom have strength to make

new friends, though there are beautiful exceptions even to this rule. It is a great quality in character — the power of making new friends in old age, and only a rare nature can *be* a new friend to an old person.

But do the old friendships grow cold?

Friendship is woven of many threads. Those people who are even moderately young, and who have the capacity to enjoy many things together, hardly stop to ask whether a friend is congenial or not. Any acquaintance who does not actually jar upon us we accept as ours. If we can ride and drive and row and dance and play tennis and enjoy the opera with a vigorous, well-dressed companion who is good-natured and tells the truth, and has no disagreeable personal habits, we think we have found a friend. We are sincere, and believe ourselves far above making merely "fair-weather friends."

Every misfortune tests friendship. Life always sifts our friends. A loss of money or a loss of health will separate us from many we had thought we could count on, even though they may not be consciously self-seekers. Most of our acquaintances will still come to call on us, even if our home is

humbler than it used to be, or if our sick room is a dull place; their self-respect brings them, as well as a good-natured sympathy, but the spring of their interest in us is often broken, and the acquaintance languishes when we can no longer enjoy the same pursuits together. Perhaps no one is much to blame. The fact is, we were never friends, though we had supposed we were. But the real friends, who have endured the many tests of life, find a new test awaiting them in old age, one of the severest of all.

Some one says to me that the reason traveling is such a test of friendship is because we are all tired at once, and that explains the strain that sometimes comes to two old friends who have cheerfully borne the burden and the heat of the day together. In the past, if one fainted, the other was at hand to give him the efficient care he needed and to love him all the better for the service. But when both faint at once, who is to restore them? Old people who live with the young do not have this kind of strain; but on the other hand they are never able to keep pace with their companions, so that these friendships are necessarily of a dif-

ferent fibre from those of contemporaries. One who has proved herself the stanchest of friends to many different men and women through all the trying vicissitudes of their lives, and through great weakness and misfortune of her own, once gave me her version of the pain that seems almost inevitable at some time or other in the relations of close friends, however noble. "We lean upon another with perfect confidence," she said, "and then, at some crisis in our lives, we find that we must lean more heavily. The other, who has always been glad to bear our weight, has borne all he had strength for before. The new weight prostrates him, and we become suddenly aware that we have leaned too heavily." Here is a test that proves the finest natures.

I have lately seen a letter written by a delicate woman who has upheld another — a helpless invalid — for half a lifetime, who has given her a home, care in illness, sympathy in good report and evil report, and who has seen that the invalid's dainty tastes were all satisfied. To do this she has had to overcome obstacles before which most of us would have quailed. Now she has herself

been dangerously ill, and only the most perfect quiet will save her from such a wreck as will make the rest of her life a burden to herself and prevent her being anything to a large circle of friends who count upon her for the best in their lives. She writes: "I went from the ordeal in New York to find Elizabeth terribly ill in X.; I had to turn from her, — it was my only chance, — but I left a good caretaker with her. It is still doubtful if she can rally. . . . Poor, poor Elizabeth! I always thought she would have me to rely on while I lived." She has had to turn from the poor Elizabeth. She had no choice; but can the dying woman, missing the only friend she has at this supreme moment, quite understand that her friend has not failed?

To the old such tests of friendship often come. Even when the friendship is real, when the friends love each other sincerely, there is often — perhaps usually — a temporary but very painful slackening of friendship as both friends become physically unable to fulfill the expectations their bond in the past implies. Friendship cannot mean exactly the same to the old as to the young. It is both less and more.

Half friendship, as I have said, consists in enjoying things together. A lady says to me: "I like to do things with others." And this lady has done delightful things with her special friend. She has been with her to all the first views of the art exhibitions and to hear all the good music in Boston for many years past. The two have traveled all over Europe together. They have made excursions constantly in company. They have delighted in going to church together. They have worked thoughtfully and generously together in their charities. I cannot believe that their friendship will ever wane. But if one of them should become blind, they could no longer enjoy first views together, and if the hearing of the other should fail, what companionship could they enjoy at a symphony concert? Half the congeniality of these friends comes from their power to see the same beauty in pictures and to hear the same harmonies in music. Such similar tastes would seem to be a worthy foundation for their friendship. And yet if it has no deeper foundation, it may be swept away. If the friends are merely good comrades, what will be left to them when one can

no longer see pictures and the other can no longer hear symphonies? And however deep the foundation, will it not be severely tested? Can two people always talk of the past, even if its crowning glory has been that they have enjoyed it together? Can they always talk of the inner life, even when the truest life of both is within? The body is the organ through which, in this world at least, the soul expresses itself; and when the body fails, how can the soul assert itself? And with the old, the body always does fail.

In supposing one of two friends to become blind and the other deaf, I have taken an extreme case, in order to state the question fully. But while few become totally blind or stone-deaf, with almost all old people both the eyes and ears grow dull and the strength fails. Now suppose that two friends both love pictures and music, and are in the habit of enjoying them together, but that one cares more for pictures and the other more for music. So long as both are strong, they help each other, and through mutual education, they draw nearer and nearer together. Then come their days of weakness, and there is a crisis in their

friendship. Shall they go to the Art Club in the afternoon and to the Symphony in the evening, as of old? Neither has the strength to do so much. One would choose the pictures, but the other longs for the music. Nothing can be easier at first than for each to yield to the other. But the calls for self-sacrifice become constant. One has such weak eyes that she can never look at pictures with any pleasure; the other misses so many notes in the music that the harmony becomes chaos. The sacrifices one makes for the other are fruitless. What pleasure can it give me to have you go to an art exhibition with me, if I know your eyes are aching? What pleasure can it be to you to have me sit beside you at a concert when you know that not one melody reaches my brain? And so the ways divide. One goes to the exhibition and one goes to the concert, — unless, indeed, they both stay stupidly at home, — and each tries in some imperfect fashion to tell the other what she has seen or heard; but they are no more comrades.

"I am sorry for my cousin," a lady said. "His love for nature is a passion, but for years he has

hardly had a tramp in the woods because his wife is an invalid. When he is ready to start, she is sure to have an attack of illness. I have seen him turn back a hundred times tenderly, without an impatient word, just as he was about to set off as full of glee as a boy." Of course he was right to turn back. There is something sweeter in ministering to an invalid we love than the most passionate lover of nature can find in a woodland walk. If any one doubts it, let him read the love-letters of the Brownings. But then, we must really love the invalid, and I think, too, that the invalid must be worth loving. I should have very little faith in an invalid who, seeing her husband preparing for a woodland tramp, did not try her best to keep back her groans till he was fairly out of the house.

I fancy that at the point where physical weakness destroys comradeship men who are friends often drop each other; that is, they meet on the common ground still left to them, but make little effort to keep up the old habits. As Thackeray says, they are not "capable of bearing friendship," and they meet their fate without many words.

But women are more emotional, and they do not yield so easily, — that is, if they really love each other: for simple comrades always part company here. They try to live the old life, but they have not the strength for it. And then one says a tired word that sounds like a sharp word, and the other replies with another tired word that sounds still sharper, and there is a "little rift within the lute," and their nerves are henceforth on edge whenever they meet. Each begins to wonder if the other may not be really a little to blame that the sources of mutual pleasure have been cut off, and the fabric of a friendship whose foundations had seemed like those of the everlasting hills begin to totter. The worst of all their suffering is that each doubts her friend. We realize that our parents are old, and are considerate of them; but it is harder to realize that one of our contemporaries has lost some power that we ourselves still possess. Sometimes a friendship is thus destroyed completely. But with women of noble nature, love is stronger than suspicion, and the painful crisis passes. At last the winter is over, and the friendship blossoms again, all the more

beautifully because it has borne the test of the frosts that could not kill it.

Love is something higher than the power to enjoy together the beauty of the woods, or of music, or of painting; still, when the two who have enjoyed the outer world together can no longer do so, the inner world is sometimes also almost rent asunder, and alas for those whose outer life has never been the expression of an inner spiritual life. Alas for those who have enjoyed pleasures together, but who have never worked heartily together to bless somebody besides themselves.

When, for any reason, we become a physical burden to our dearest, a still severer test is applied that can be borne only by the most perfect friendship. In reading Browning's life, I have often been struck, not only by his tremendous power of loving, but by his power to be an enthusiastic friend to many who must have been a physical strain to him. He was hale to fourscore, to be sure, and yet he had years of semi-invalidism from which he seems to have been almost emancipated by his love for his wife, as she in her turn was raised from a living grave by the intensity of her affection for

him. Such a man as Browning shows us in the twinkling of an eye that Thackeray's dictum of old age and friendship, though it might be the result of keen observation, was not made in one of his moments of insight; and when we have faced all the dismal facts about old age that I have felt bound to set down in this chapter, we are still undaunted, knowing that true friendship is immortal, and that when all selfishness has been strained out of our lives, we shall be free to enjoy it. Sacrifices are called for, and glad we are to make them. Without the sacrifices, we could never have guessed what friendship really is. We can even accept with enthusiasm the sacrifices made for us, because of the exquisite delight of seeing the full beauty of our friend's spirit.

I have seen physical loss that seemed to threaten the disruption of a friendship serve in the end to bind the friends more closely together. One friend became deaf. The other ignored the deafness. She asserted that she did not even perceive it. How should she when she held her afflicted friend so close to her that even the lowest of her clear tones could be distinctly heard? But the deafness in-

creased, till even a trumpet was of little use, and the unselfish friend lost her voice. The Fates seemed to conspire to separate them. But she who could not speak would not own herself vanquished. She wrote what she wanted to say, and she wrote so fully and freely that the communication between the two hardly seemed interrupted. But such an effort prostrated her. Both friends were old, and neither had the strength necessary to use the lip language. One had eyes too weak to learn it. The other was too frail to make the effort necessary for clear enunciation. The physical obstacles on both sides were too great to be overcome. Often and often the friends were too feeble to meet. Yet when they met there was a sparkle of the eye and a radiance in the smile that told them both that the old enthusiasm of their friendship still blazed at its brightest.

There are no verses in literature more touching than Cowper's, beginning

"The twentieth year is well-nigh past,"

written to Mrs. Unwin when her powers were almost exhausted:—

"Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

. . . . . .

"Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary!

"Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st
That now at every step thou mov'st
Upheld by two; yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary!

"And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!"

Cowper had that saddest of all experiences, the knowledge that his friend, whose love was so perfect, was broken through his own mental malady.

"And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!"

The friendship that endures through insanity on the one side and complete bodily exhaustion on the other must have its roots in eternity.

It must be that what we believe to be friendship must often fail with the body, because we have to learn the great lesson that though the body is the necessary instrument of the soul in this world, it is only an instrument. How far does the body rule us? This is the question we are forced to ask ourselves when a trusted friendship crumbles. But a true friendship outrides the storm, and the old know heights and depths in friendship, hidden from the young. Love increases with age, not only because of the wonderful background of loving memories, becoming richer every year, but because it has been nourished by countless sacrifices in the past. For these reasons the love of old married people is something unspeakably tender.

"John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither."

But even the marriage bond is sometimes broken; and for those who are simply friends, it is far easier to snap the bond when it begins to chafe.

When we feel the strain, when the test of friendship is applied, how shall we meet it? We think our friend is failing us. How shall we be sure not to fail ourselves? For our own disabilities, let us bear them as lightly and cheerfully as possible, and for the rest — my dear friend says, "Speak always to the friend that *may* be." When we do that, our last lesson in friendship will be learned.

XVI

LAST LESSONS IN CHARACTER

While some characters grow more and more beautiful to the end of life, this is not true of all. Most of us have been saddened by seeing cases of deterioration in old people, even among those who have followed high ideals all their lives. There are certain faults, too, that seem to belong peculiarly to old age. What does this mean?

Often the deterioration is due entirely to physical causes. The mind and body are so bound together that when either begins to fail, the other also wanes. The failure in character is often the result of disease of the brain even when this is not marked enough to be clearly recognized, and in passing judgment on any given case, we must always allow for this possibility and judge kindly. How far another is responsible for failure we can never know; perhaps we cannot even know how far we are responsible for our own failures: yet we are conscious sometimes, in our own case, that there is responsibility.

One form of deterioration is suggested by a friend, who asks, "Why is it that those who have fought against some fault all their lives so often seem to be mastered by it in their old age?"

Another friend answers, "Because they have not really learned their lesson. For example," she says, "a boy who has not conquered the first book in geometry, however hard he may have studied, will find himself in deep water when he has to apply its principles in the second book."

No doubt this is the true explanation in many cases. The lesson had seemed to be learned when life was fresh and vigorous, but it was not so thoroughly learned that it could be applied when the body was feeble and the old props were removed.

But even when the first book has been made our own, the second book may have difficulties that will stagger us. In a discussion of character, we may leave out of account people who are irresponsible through disease of the brain; but there are various degrees of responsibility, and it certainly seems as if the lessons set some scholars are harder than those of others.

I do not remember any other example in litera-

ture to be compared with the powerful delineation which Thackeray has given us of the old age of Colonel Newcome. Though it is fiction, yet it is the fiction of a master who understood humanity so well that it is worth as serious study as if Colonel Newcome had lived in the flesh. Brave, generous, affectionate, modest, as ready to ask forgiveness as to grant it, this man met trial after trial all through his life, and his character came out of the furnace shining always brighter and brighter. And then, toward the last, there is a change. He has lost all his money when he is too old to earn more. He has carried down his friends in his fall. His only child, his splendid Clive, has made a wretched marriage, and the mother-in-law drives both Clive and his father almost mad with her petty tyranny. Then the colonel loses the old sweetness of temper. He becomes revengeful towards his nephew Barnes, who certainly richly deserved any punishment: only we do not like to think of our gentle colonel administering it. More than that, he is dissatisfied with the poor, harassed Clive himself, and angry with his dearly loved Ethel, who, whatever her faults in the past, is now at her very best,

and trying to help him. What does this all mean? It means that though he has mastered the first book, — and in his case, let us say the second book also, — yet the third book is very hard. He is being tried in a hotter furnace than any in which he has suffered before. But Thackeray is right in making him triumph in the end. He dies in an almshouse, to be sure, but he does not die with revenge and anger in his heart. He had seemed to be humble always; but it was not till the very end that he was made perfect in humility.

Real humility is one of the hardest lessons in the whole great book of life, and it is this lesson that is set for almost all people who live to be old.

There are various minor faults that often appear in old age, such as want of neatness, undue curiosity, and lack of interest in life; and these, perhaps, are not of very much importance, — except, indeed, as the loss of interest in life shows that we are less unselfishly alive to the welfare of others than we should wish to be when we have nothing to look forward to for ourselves. But it seems to me that most of the serious faults we observe in the old have their foundation in the fact that so

difficult a lesson as humility has been set for this period of life.

It is inevitable that the old should have to bear neglect, or, rather, what seems neglect to them. They think the young neglect them. But a young person who should give an old person constant devotion would make a complete sacrifice of life, and not always to the best end. Of course there must be sacrifices; but I love to see the brave, unselfish old men and women who send their children and grandchildren out on pleasure trips as often as they possibly can, while they pass their dull hours alone. They cannot keep the pace of the young. They acknowledge it humbly, and do not choose to tie the young to their crutches.

But the old are neglected even by their contemporaries. At least, your friend, who is feeble himself, cannot come to see you when you are too feeble to go to him. Why should you fancy that you are neglected, even though you are left alone? There is a reason for it. Sometimes, it is true, the reason is the mortifying one, that with the failure of your powers you have less to give than of old, and so others are not attracted toward you. You

acknowledge the fact, and you do not want anybody to come to see you simply for pity's sake; yet the acknowledgment is bitter. You did not think your last lesson was going to be so hard to learn.

I once heard a preacher say that a priest who had heard thousands of confessions declared that among them all, no one had ever confessed to the sin of envy. A discussion that followed the remark developed the fact that not one of the audience believed himself guilty of this sin. Yet I once heard a noble and sweet old lady say, almost under her breath, but with an air of absolute conviction, "I envy people." She was suffering from great stress of circumstances. She was poor and ill and did not know where to turn. It seemed unjust that she should be in such need, for her life had been spent in patient work that everybody acknowledged to be of the highest value, and yet it had not received the payment that is given to much that is inferior. No trace of envy ever appeared in her manner toward the lucky inferiors; but she acknowledged the fault, and so, I suppose, she was well on the way to amend it.

I have often had occasion to wonder if envy is not a rather common fault among the old. When you are young and strong and feel that the world is before you, it is easy to be magnanimous. Your friend has gained a prize. Very well. You rejoice with him. Even when it is a prize you had hoped to gain yourself, still, you say generously that there are other prizes waiting for you, and you do not grudge him his success. But when your day of work is over and you have nothing more to hope for, when you may not even *try* for anything more, when you think how little of what you hoped to do you have actually accomplished, then it is somewhat hard to say, —

> "Others shall sing the song,
> Others shall right the wrong,
> Finish what I begin
> And what I fail of, win."

Perhaps it is true that you have accomplished some things, while others have accomplished some other things, and yet you meant to do everything yourself, — and now the day is over.

It takes a very large heart not to be envious when you are old. And when you have conquered

envy, you have nearly learned the last lesson of life. Dante makes pride a still deadlier sin than envy, and until pride is altogether subdued, we have not fully learned our last lesson. Now, in old age, comes the fiercest struggle with pride. Whatever the achievements of the past, however rich and great and honored we may be, nothing can satisfy a proud spirit but a continuance of personal power; and when we know that we are weak and helpless, we realize that the hottest inward battle of our lives is before us. Sometimes, indeed, we hardly know how to vanquish all pride without destroying something of true self-respect.

Why are these terrible lessons given us just at the end? For the same reason that the most difficult courses of study are set for the senior year in college. Those who have done all the previous work well can do this work too, addressing themselves to it with the calmness and patience that has become a habit through long exercise. But it is not easy for the most diligent.

Why are such lessons needed? Because the best in us is never fully developed till we have been tested at every point. We long to be our

best. There is nothing we long for so much. And shall we shrink from the training that helps us to be our best? We do shrink. It is only those whose life has been spent in steadily facing the enemy who have the courage not to shrink from these last tests. Most of us have been poltroons sometimes in our lives, and so we feel the twinge of cowardice at the last. But let us at least remember that the lessons are needed, that we cannot be fit for the higher life we long for without them, and however our heart may sink, let us set about our task.

That these lessons are given us just at the time when all true life seems to us to be over, carries with it a real inspiration. It means that we are at the beginning of a new life when we had stupidly fancied that there was nothing for us but the end. It is a promise of immortality. What seems like a sentence of death when the powers so fail that we no longer have "a point of pride" left to us, is simply a call to a fuller life, when, through humility, we have lost our little selves in the great Life of the universe.

XVII

PRIVILEGES

The old have their own privileges. When we dwell on their disabilities, we paint a sombre picture; but in real life we find, I think, as many happy faces among the old as among the young, and more than among the middle-aged, who set their teeth as they grapple with the anxieties that surround them.

"Old people are always taken care of," a hard worker says grimly. "Everybody knows they cannot work. I should like to found a hospital for the middle-aged."

Well, both the work and the rest belong to life, and it is a satisfaction to the old to feel that the time for rest has come, a sweeter satisfaction to those who have earned the rest by faithful work than to others. For one who is tired out, it is delightful not to be expected to work, even to know that it is impossible to work, since, if possible, it would usually be absolutely necessary. It is delightful to know that you cannot keep up with

the times, and that therefore you need not try, that you need not harass yourself further in the endeavor to find a becoming bonnet, since you will not have occasion to wear one, that you may be as old-fashioned as you please and that everybody will forgive you. Thackeray wrote a charming paper On the Pleasures of being a Fogy, and many old people echo his sentiments.

If the old cannot have as many pleasures as they once had, at all events other people take a great interest in furthering such pleasures as they can enjoy. I remember, as a case in point, an old lady living in an apartment house, who was invited to spend Thanksgiving with a relative in a distant part of the city. She had not been out of the house for months, but everybody was determined that she should not lose this pleasure. She could not go in the street-cars, but some one at once offered to engage a close carriage, though this would have been thought far too great an extravagance had she been younger. She had no suitable bonnet or cloak. Who needs a bonnet or cloak in a close carriage? everybody said. A velvet hood, made twenty years before, and a veteran shawl, were pro-

nounced by all the connoisseurs to be most elegant and suitable. Some one was ready to help the old lady in adjusting her neat black dress and shining white lace; the janitor himself — and he was not more active on most occasions than the majority of his race — was at hand to support her faltering steps down the stairs to the carriage, and the driver took the liveliest interest in bestowing his passenger comfortably. A dozen people wished her *bon voyage*. At the Thanksgiving dinner, hers, of course, was the place of honor. She was first served, and to the best of everything. Hers was the most comfortable chair, hers the warmest corner. One vied with another in rendering her little services. She was the central figure in the circle. Everybody listened to her stories with the closest attention. Her spirits rose and she bubbled over with fun. The whole entertainment was charming, and she was the life of the party.

Who is so deferred to at twenty years old? Or at thirty? Or at forty? It is worth while to be eighty years old, and feeble, to have such a day, and to know that every individual about you is bent on making you happy. You feel, for once,

that in spite of all the losses of the years, you still have the "troops of friends" that Shakespeare sets down in his enumeration of the blessings that should attend old age. It is not that you feel young again. No young person feels as you do. But for once you enjoy the full privilege of your age.

So much for the minor privileges of old age. You could do very well without them. But you have a better heritage. Doctor Edward Everett Hale says in homely phrase, that Mrs. Morrow, who was sixty years of age, "was no longer a fool." Who would object to being sixty years of age to be no longer a fool?

A much-tried woman I know once said to me, "No, I do not want to be young again. *No young person can know the joy of victory.*" I leave that statement as it stands for each to interpret according to his insight; but perhaps it will not mean as much to others as it does to me, for I saw the battle my friend had to fight, and the hosts seemed to be still marshaled against her when she spoke of the joy of victory, and declared that she would not, if she could, go back to youth.

Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton says: "I consider old age the hey-day of life, the grandest season allotted to mortals. We have learned to weigh things correctly. Our views are broader, and knowledge of life's workings deeper and truer. Clearer vision comes as the years go by. I say it unhesitatingly — no woman reaches the fullest mental development until after she is fifty. Then in the afternoon of life comes leisure. We have time to read, to think, and to watch the fulfillment of hopes and the strides of progress. Life adjusts itself, and if we retain our interest in our fellow creatures and in the affairs of every-day life, we shall find our time and minds as full, as pleasantly full, as in the days of our youth." Is not this a bright picture? But we know it is faithful to many old people.

The fact that we see the needs of the world so much more clearly than we did when we were young makes it possible for us to help it more effectually: for it takes something more than raw muscle to do good deeds.

And then, at the end of life, we often have more outside resources. Some of us have more money

and more power than we used to have, and all of us have more acquaintances, so that if our will is set towards any good end, we have more agents for reaching it.

Browning thinks the pause toward the close of life is a special privilege to give us the chance to weigh the past and receive from it the full help it has to give the future.

"And I shall thereupon
Take rest ere I be gone
Again on my adventure strange and new,
Fearless and unperplexed
When I do battle next
What weapons to select, what armor to indue."

That is a brave belief. So much of our lives we are "moving about in worlds not realized" that we must feel it would be worth every pang that comes from weakness and pain to be able to sift our experiences and learn how to make them tell in a new life. I do not suppose many people do this consciously in old age. Browning was not old himself when he wrote *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. Still, the old do, almost unawares, judge their own past, and from it they learn what they wish to save.

XVIII

SUNSET

THERE are more beautiful sunsets than gloomy ones. A rainy day often ends in a glorious sky. It is always worth hoping for. Sometimes, of course, the mists endure to the end, but far oftener the sun bursts through them, and the illumination is all the more splendid because of the brilliant colors reflected from the varying clouds. We need not *fear* that life will end in a cloud. We have every reason to hope otherwise; and then, even if our hope should not be realized, the cloudy hours will be shortened. To look at life as "A beautiful Now and a better To Be," is to take the true attitude toward it always, though probably none of us can altogether escape seasons when we are so weighed down by grief and care that we cannot rise to such a height. When the old live in that spirit, the sunset of life is supremely lovely.

Some old people seem to have all

"which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."

I have known many happy husbands and wives who in their age lived in comfort and ease, with good health, — even though strength may have waned, — with children and grandchildren about them, loving and reverencing them, and with friends who honored them. In cases like these, there is a "Beautiful Now." And if life has taught those so blest to look beyond to a "Better To Be," their sunset is serene.

But when we have fallen into the "sere and yellow leaf," we have not always all the blessing that in Shakespeare's mind "should accompany old age." There are clouds in most sunsets though the beauty is not the less for that.

I remember a poor little home where the old husband and wife sat side by side, quietly looking out at the world, as John Anderson and his wife may have sat at the last. They were poor and uneducated, they had no children and not many friends; but they cheerfully helped each other to keep their little home neat, and they worked as they could, the husband doing odd jobs for the

neighbors, and the wife helping the busy housekeepers in an emergency. They looked as if their sunset was serene.

I know two charming old ladies who are sisters. They live a life of devotion to each other. You might think the beauty of life was past because they are so frail. One or the other is always ill. But their love for each other illuminates even the sick room. She who is well spends herself for her sister, and when she falls ill in turn, her convalescent sister watches over her with the same untiring love. They are devoted to each other but not absorbed in each other, which is a very different thing. They cannot often go away, but their cheerful refined home is full of friendly life. It stands in the middle of the village, and everybody drops in, sure of a cordial welcome. There is always room at their hospitable tea-table for any forlorn neighbor who happens to feel lonely. One of the ladies is past ninety, and her reminiscences are invaluable to all those of the younger generations who wish to know the past of the county. The other still successfully cultivates a beautiful garden. It not only adds to the brightness of the

village, but its treasures are freely gathered for the sick and the poor, and for decoration at any festival, and always for the church. It is love for each other and for their neighbors that makes the clouds of their sunset so rosy.

My earliest impression of old age was beautiful. As a child, I used to see at church a noble, white-haired old gentleman past ninety who, at certain of the services, was in the habit of rising and repeating reverently the 103d Psalm. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." So I learned to think of age as a time to give thanks for the mercies of life.

In all the cases I have spoken of, the old people had an assured place in a home among their own kindred who loved them. But some must be alone. I know a cheerful old gentleman, left alone, whose smile is always bright. He cultivates his garden and gives his neighbors fresh vegetables, and as he does his own cooking, the neighboring housewives have an opportunity to return his favors by sending him choice dishes of their own making. He devotes himself to his church, to his prayer-meeting, and to his duties as a citizen. He is the

best of grandfathers, though his grandchildren are too far away to give him their company often. He writes cheerful letters to his lonely, unmarried nieces, scattered about the country, determined to send as much sunshine into their lives as he can. Then, in the tedious winter hours when his rheumatism keeps him at home, he whiles away the time by writing out his reminiscences. "Nobody will publish them," he says, for his school-days were short, and he doubts whether he can put his anecdotes into phrases that will bear criticism. And, indeed, his reminiscences are worth while, for he was a sailor in the days when Samoa was the home of cannibals, and he landed in California before gold was discovered there.

I remember a woman who was even more alone, whose face was always bright. She had never had such a home as seems the birthright of all, for she was an illegitimate child. She had had her own living to earn, and she had had to work hard for it. And yet she had succeeded in caring for others who had been kind to her. In her old age she had only a pittance and not a relative in the world. Then her sight began to fail ominously.

She knew that if she lived long she should be blind. Still, her cheerfulness and courage did not fail. She kept chickens and sold eggs. She made jelly to sell — and she still could be generous. She could give away a glass of jelly or half-a-dozen eggs sometimes. She thankfully accepted the good dinners to which one or another neighbor would invite her from time to time. I believe she thought her lines had fallen in pleasant places. She was devoted to church-work. As she lay ill, she heard of the death of a valued friend who was one of the most efficient of her co-workers. "We shall miss her dreadfully," she said, "but the rest of us must work all the harder." Then, in a few days, she slipped away from earth, brave and cheerful to the end.

You see that circumstances are nothing, after all. It is the spirit that rules. We should not choose to be poor and ill and blind and alone in our old age, but we may be all these, and still our sunset may be beautiful. The brave and cheerful always see the sun behind the clouds ; but those who have love in their hearts carry the sunshine with them.

Even when the power to work is gone, the spirit

need not fail. It is what we are and not what we do that counts. It is the "atmosphere" we carry with us that makes our lives beautiful, and that enables us to touch other lives with beauty.

Not all sunsets are beautiful. Mrs. Thrale's picture of the last days of life in *The Three Warnings* used to be in the reading-books when I was a girl, and the children who read the verses always laughed at them. Does everybody remember them?

> "The tree of deepest root is found
> Least willing yet to leave the ground.
> It has been sung by ancient sages
> That love of life increased with years,
> So much that in our latter stages,
> When pains grow sharp and sickness rages,
> The greatest love of life appears."

What amused the children was, first, the account of "Neighbor Dobson's wedding-day," when Death called upon the "jocund groom" to quit his "Susan's side," and, afterwards, when the bridegroom had begged off for the time, and had extorted a promise from Death that he should have three warnings before being forced to accompany

him, the still greater unwillingness he showed to go, though Death pertinently declared, —

> "If you are lame, and deaf, and blind,
> You've had your three sufficient warnings."

The children could not understand that anybody who was lame and deaf and blind should care about living. But then death seemed a long way off to them. When it is very near, a stout heart sometimes falters. On the earth you feel at home. You believe in a beautiful life beyond, but it is strange to you. You would like to stay a little — only a little longer — on this green earth.

We shall hardly find a more masterly treatment of this subject than in the *Alkestis* of Euripides, in the dialogue between Admetus and his old father Pheres. When Admetus was doomed by the Fates to die, they granted his life to Apollo on condition that some one should voluntarily die in his stead. No one would do this but his young and dearly loved wife, Alkestis. It seemed monstrous to Admetus that he must lose her — and he had thought it would be easy for his father or mother to make the sacrifice for him. "Thou exceedest all in nothingness of soul," he says to

Pheres, "who, being of the age thou art, and having come to the goal of life, neither hadst the will nor the courage to die for thy son. . . . In vain then do old men pray to be dead, complaining of age, and the long time of life; but if death come near, not one is willing to die, and old age is no longer burdensome to them." Pheres replies to the charge of "nothingness of soul" by pointing out the "nothingness of soul" of Admetus himself. "Hold thy peace," he says, "and consider, if thou lovest thy life, that all love theirs." "What," says Admetus, in astonishment, "is it the same thing for a man in his prime, and for an old man to die?" "Sweet is this light of the God," says Pheres, "sweet is it."

Who, as he reads Mrs. Thrale, does not wince at the possibility of ever becoming like Neighbor Dobson, not because he was "lame, and deaf, and blind," but because he clung to life simply for the sake of existing and not for its noble uses? Who, as he reads Euripides, does not feel a longing to be like Alkestis rather than like Pheres, even though it was Admetus and not Pheres who was in the wrong? And yet the words of Pheres

are touching: "Sweet is this light of the God, sweet is it." We *ought* to feel it is sweet, even when we are called to leave it. Pheres thought only of a sombre underworld to come, and that he was leaving light forever. His temptation was sorer than that of those who feel, like Elsie of the *Golden Legend* who gives her life for Prince Henry, that death is

> "Only a step into the open air
> Out of a tent already luminous
> With light that shines through its transparent walls."

But Alkestis, too, felt that she must leave the light forever, and yet she chose death because the only life worth having was the noblest life.

It is not clouds that make a gloomy sunset, but clouds untouched by the radiance of the sun behind them. I hope we have all been so happy as to have seen old people whose hearts were so full of love and faith that every new burden laid upon them was only like another cloud shining with color added to their sunset. To love the world while we are in it, no matter how heavily we are weighted, and then to be glad to leave it when our day has come, is to have a triumphant life.

The dread of the unknown is somewhat a matter of temperament, though the habit of always facing duty, whatever its possible results may be, will certainly go far to correct the shrinking from death that so often seems inborn. And it is a help to us all to know that others look forward hopefully even when we are beset by doubts ourselves. But nobody can prove immortality to another. It is a personal experience. A kind, gentle old lady, who has passed her life in making others happy, says earnestly, "I like to hear others say that they *believe* in a beautiful future; but when they say they *know*, I stop listening. *Nobody knows*." And yet not all who say they know are using cant. The conviction of the truth of what they say is so vivid that they *believe* they know, at all events.

Many people are born with the feeling of immortality so firmly implanted within them that the belief is never shaken. Others take without question what their parents teach them, and never doubt the future. Others, and there are many such, seem to win immortality here in this world by living so faithfully in the spirit of the great truths that make life eternal even now, they dis-

card so completely all that is merely temporary in their daily lives, that they, too, feel sure that they *know* the future. And yet no one of these people can teach immortality to another. And there are some, even among the most faithful souls, who can never overcome the fear imposed upon them by an anxious temperament. Such a fear clouds the sunset of life, and calls for pity. But the sun does shine even when the clouds hide it completely. And those who realize this can often comfort and reassure those who do not.

When the mind is withdrawn, the sunset is darkest of all. But perhaps then it is oftener the friends of the afflicted one who suffer than the one whose mind is darkened.

> "God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform."

And who can venture to suggest an explanation for this last calamity?

That the sunset of life is always more beautiful to those who have faith than to those who have not is certainly true, and faithfulness usually, though not always, brings faith with it. "Insight," says Doctor Gordon, in his *Ultimate Con-*

ceptions of Faith, "is not the first but the final mood of the doer of righteousness. . . . For the normal believer the full truth is the glorious sundown at the earthly limit of love and service."

"To nobler service ye pass on,"

Charles Wesley sings.

I wonder if anybody reads *De Senectute* in modern days without a feeling of sadness that, with all its noble thought, it is so little touched by the ideal. Christianity has given us an ideal so far beyond that of Cicero that our whole tone of thought is unconsciously heightened by it.

This is a gift to us, and it transfigures the clouds of our sunset. When we have learned that we are children of a Father whose name is Love, the trials of life count for little, even in the most narrow and painful old age.

The clouds gather. The sun goes down; but it has not perished. Then "the deeper midnight uncovers larger stars," and then, lo!

"'T is sunrise on the mountains
And life is yet to win."

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